EIGHTEEN HUNDRED

AND

FIFTEEN.

EIGHTEEN HUNDRED AND FIFTEEN;

A Satirical Novel.

BY

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"REJECTED ODES, &c. &c."

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CHAP. X.

Midnight horrors—Apprehensions and self-accusations—Preparations for an illustrious duel—Delays and disappointments—A parting scene—The field of battle—The duel and its consequences—Duke Ernest keeps the field.

The citadel-clock struck four. Duke Ernest had counted the various chimes from midnight; for no sooner had the voice of his beloved duchess ceased to charm his ears, and animate his courage; no sooner had she dropped into a slumber, and the horrors of the darkness and silence visited him in all

their *sombre* influence, than his highness began to think upon the step he had taken, and the possible results of the morning's engagement, and of the agony of mind to which he had subjected himself for the intervening hours.

First of all he began to censure himself for having consented so readily to expose himself to the chance of death; for although he had made up his mind to use every possible exertion to avoid a contest, his heart terribly misgave him, and he felt an inward conviction that his brother Cantab would be satisfied with nothing short of hostile measures. He accused himself of folly, in suffering any female, even his dear duchess, to persuade him to run his head into a scrape which might prove fatal to him. Next, he began to picture to himself the termination of the fray: although Duke

Cantab was not a celebrated shot, a bullet might by chance strike its object; and cold chills ran over him as he thought on the probability that he might be brought home by sun-rise, wounded and ghastly with pain, or perhaps a stiff and inanimate corpse. At this juncture of his meditations, the apprehensions of his mind so completely overpowered him, that he uttered a loud and deep groan, followed by the alarming exclamation of "Oh Lord!" a dozen times repeated.

"What in the name of heaven is the matter?" exclaimed the duchess, who had been thoroughly aroused from her sleep by the hollow ejaculations. "Are there assassins in the room? Has your valet made an attack upon your life? or what, what in God's name has happened to you?"

"Nothing — that is — nothing—no— nothing at all," faltered the agitated and still trembling duke. "Only a few very dismal thoughts came over my mind."

"Oh then you were dreaming, I suppose," returned the duchess, "and was only groaning in your sleep. Compose yourself to sleep, my lord duke."

"Compose myself!—What, me?—I compose myself to sleep!" cried the duke, in a tone of unparalleled anguish. "How can I compose myself to sleep, when I call to mind that before day-break I am to be led to slaughter. Oh Lord! I shall be certain to be killed, as I am now alive."

"Killed!" reiterated the duchess. "Do, for heaven's sake, banish these

foolish and unmanly apprehensions. Go to the field like a man, and 'tis ten to one if Cantab will have the courage to face you, and to bring matters to a serious issue, when he finds you intrepid and determined."

"If I thought so," returned the duke, "by all the saints in the calendar, I would march to the field like an Achilles: but I have very alarming doubts on the subject, I do assure you, my dear duchess; and these doubts and terrors are too strong for me to endure."

"Nonsense, nonsense!" replied the duchess. "Now do pray go to sleep, and think no more about it; and don't be so unpolite as to disturb me again with your horrid noises. You know I shall not be able to exist to-morrow, if I get no repose to-night. O dear, if you

are overcome with apprehensions, I am with sleepiness; so, good night, my dear spouse. God bless you; and send, you comfortable repose!"

As her highness said this, she turned herself round, gave two or three long and hearty yawns, and in a few moments had relapsed into a quiet slumber, while the Duke lay, inwardly cursing her evident indifference as to what became of him, and lamenting that ever he had been tempted by a pretty face and an imposing person to supplant his brother. Most willingly would he have undone the whole knot of his misdoings, if it had been practicable; but alas, that which was past, he admitted the impossibility of recalling, and that which was to come he saw no means of avoiding.

Hour after hour dragged heavily away,

The duke now and then, overcome by the fatigue of incessant vexation, would fall into a restless doze, when his diseased imagination presented to him images not a whit less dreadful than the real horrors of his waking contemplation. He dreamt of nothing but scars and death: now his brother Cantab was savagely mangling him with his sword, now was piercing all his limbs with bullets, while his duchess stood by apparently gratified at the disfigurement of her spouse, and ready to reward the conqueror with her hand.

He had started from this unhappy repose, if repose it might be called, about a dozen times, when the citadel clock struck four. There was no time for further delay, yet the duke still lay quiet, secretly determined to let the critical moment pass by, lest the duchess

should awaken and compel him to be on the alert. Every moment which flitted along raised the barometer of his hopes, and he began to respire more freely, and really to indulge something like an expectation that he might miss the appointment, when a movement of the duchess overthrew every thing.

"Come, come, my dear Ernest," said the duchess, rubbing her eyes, and surveying the watch which was suspended over her head; "come, you must be very speedy in your movements, for I would not for the world, that the duke, your brother, should have to chide you for delay. We must rouse Legrange," continued her highness, violently ringing the bell as she spoke—"and give him orders to prepare your pistols and ammunition."

"Pistols and ammunition!" faintly echoed the duke: "tell him to fetch the clergyman and an experienced surgeon, for I must prepare for death, or at least for a painful and tedious visitation of wounds and misery. Mercy on me, why did I ever consent to meet him?"

The duchess paid little or no attention to the distressed language of her husband, but rising out of bed, went into her dressing room, where she was in a moment attended by her maid; and in a few minutes, Legrange entered his master's apartment to equip him for the expedition.

Legrange had been made acquainted the evening before, with the particulars of the service on which he would be required the next morning, and as he was always fond of a little circumstance,

out of the ordinary routine, he had not been idle, but had prepared the pistols spontaneously, and had newly furbished his master's sword, a sword which never had been stained with human blood, (would that the same could be said of all swords !) and had put every thing in perfect readiness for the occasion. He had now started at the sound of the bell, and dressed himself expeditiously, and with sword and pistols under his arms, cutting a most warlike figure, he made his appearance.

The sight of the weapons had a terrible effect upon the duke; but as he was possessed of a little pride, in the midst of his terrors, he determined rather to attempt the concealment of his real feelings, than to degrade himself in the eye of his valet as a man of no valour nor spirit. He accordingly, after taking

a short space to recover himself as far as he was able, assumed a considerable boldness of tone and manner, and exclaimed; "be quick, Legrange! I am pleased to see that you have been so ready to prepare every thing, without waiting for my bidding."

Legrange was not deficient in penetration. He had been long enough an observer of his master's conduct, and he was by no means an inattentive one, to see that courage had no very deep root in his composition; and he was consequently very little disposed to give him credit for any extraordinary degree of intrepidity on the present occasion. He was too politic, however, to discover any thing like a suspicion of what he knew; but, on the contrary, took occasion greatly to extol the duke's personal valour, elevating it far beyond the

common standard of bravery; and this was a most sagacious expedient, for it is a notorious fact, that all men, great or little, it matters not, love better to be praised for virtues which they have not, than for all the merits which they really do possess, though the latter may fifty times outweigh the value of the former. Such is man's perversity.

It was so, on this occasion, with Duke Ernest: he felt every compliment paid to his gallantry, thrill warmly to his heart, and perhaps it produced the effect of actually inspiring him, in some degree, with the very virtue, which it pretended to have discovered and to praise, in him.

A few minutes only had elapsed before the duke and his valet were both equipped for the field. The duke ap-

proached to take leave of the duchess; and it is but strict justice to her highness, recorded to wipe away any imputation of unnatural and unjustifiable coldness on her part, to declare that she really felt a pang at the instant, which probably arose from the reflection that her husband might, perchance, return no more.

The duke himself was overcome with terror and despair, and as he embraced her with an anguished grasp, he could not avoid whispering in her ear the apprehensions by which he was torn and harassed. She exerted herself, however, to deceive him into a belief that she considered the affair as extremely trifling, and one which it was very improbable would lead to any serious consequences; and this behaviour seemed to have an effect in raising the spirits of

the duke, who tore himself from his *disconsolate* spouse, absolutely *without fainting away*.

Duke Cantab had been in the field near half an hour, when his brother arrived. He had measured the extent of Duke Ernest's courage with a great deal of accuracy, and had calculated on the probability of his exceeding the time, in order to miss the appointment. He was determined, however, to counteract this design, if it should prove to be so, by waiting on the ground for an hour or two, to give Ernest an opportunity of finding him there, even when least expected; and he was soon convinced of the truth of his anticipation, when he saw the confusion of his brother's countenance.

" Cannot this matter be adjusted ?"

asked Duke Ernest, in a very faltering tone of voice. "Cannot we come to some amicable arrangement?"

"Impossible!" replied Duke Cantab. "There is but one mode; and to that let us proceed without further parley or hesitation. Name your distance."

"Mercy on me, Cantab," cried Duke Ernest—"Do not be so hasty in your determination to take my life. Are we not the children of the same mother? Are we not brothers in nature and affection? I had as soon lift my hand against my own existence, dear Cantab, as against thine."

"So would not I," returned Duke Cantab—"I am not come here to talk about mothers, and brothers, and nature, and affection, and such like. You have

supplanted me, and stolen away the woman who was intended for my wife, and can you expect me to compromise the affair? No, no; I am too deeply injured for that; you have nothing left to do, in the way of compensation, or adjustment, but to take your ground."

"And must I raise my hand against my brother?" cried Duke Ernest—"and will that brother lift his hand against me? Would to God that I had never married the woman, if this is to be the end of it! Won't an apology, or any concession, satisfy you, my dear Cantab?"

"Pshaw! nonsense!" exclaimed Duke Cantab, in an indignant tone of voice— "If you are afraid to stand my fire, why say so at once, and don't stand hypocritically talking about what you don't feel.

Do not think that my wounds are to be salved over with such poor ointment?"

"'Afraid!" cried Duke Ernest—"What! me afraid of fire! No—no—no—no—I am not afraid—I never was afraid—no—no—Suppose we say twenty paces, unless you think that too near, and if so, as I am not sanguinely inclined, I am willing to extend it to thirty.'"

"He! he! he! my heroic brother!" vociferated Duke Cantab, laughing most immoderately, "You are resolved it shall be a bloodless conflict. Why our pistols would not strike a ball against a house at fourteen paces, and yet you talk of twenty or thirty. What say you to six?"

"Heaven forbid!" exclaimed Duke

Ernest. "Why we may as well cut each other's throat without any ceremony, as stand and fire at one another at that distance. It must be fifteen paces at the least. So, Legrange, make long strides and mark the ground."

"I will not have the distance beyond twelve paces, and that is longer than I had resolved on. And it shall be measured with none of your six feet strides, but the moderate steps of a moderate man. Stand near this tree, thus, while I myself step the ground."

Duke Cantab, as he said this, placed his brother in a situation under a sycamore, while he measured the ground, and taking his station at the end, called upon Legrange to hand him his weapon, and to toss 'up' for the fire. All this while poor Duke Ernest stood trembling

in his shoes, and expecting every moment to receive the messenger of death; and so extreme was his bodily agitation, that when his valet put the pistol into his hand, he let it fall three different times, while his countenance, pale and ghastly, was the image of despair.

At length Legrange declared that Duke Ernest had won the first fire: this circumstance tended a little to elevate his spirits, since he indulged a hope that he might disable his antagonist at the first onset, and thus escape the imminent peril to which he was now exposed. He forgot in a moment all the scruples of conscience with respect to the attack upon a brother's life, which had so lately pushed him into a desire to avoid the contest at all: and levelled his weapon with as much caution and de-

cision as the laws and customs of duelling tolerated.

Fortune, however, was no longer in favor of Duke Ernest. He had wasted his fire on the desert air, and his brother stood in the very act of levelling his pistol, when Duke Ernest began to look round him in search of some pretext which might give him the opportunity to escape. But, alas! he looked in vain: Duke Cantab had taken aim, and while Duke Ernest stood trembling, with his hands before his eyes, the ball from his antagonist's pistol, slightly grazing the little finger of his right hand, carried off just the tip of his ear.

Duke Ernest gave a shriek and a bound, and, with a single exclamation, "I am a dead man!" fell to the ground;

while his brother and the valets, excessively alarmed, ran to him to render him every assistance in their power. His highness having fainted away, the others naturally considered him as dead, but while they were hesitating over him whether they should leave the body and fly, or stay and endeavour to reconcile the parties, if life and intellectual being were not driven from Duke Ernest, his highness half raising his head, gently exclaimed, " Legrange, am I still alive, or have I awakened in another world ?" At this moment his eyes met those of his merciless brother, who, after looking over his body, and finding nothing but the trifling flesh wound, which had bled profusely, began secretly to revile Duke Ernest as a disgrace to himself, his family, and connections.

Legrange whispered courage in his

master's ear, who then suffered himself to be lifted from the ground, and stood trembling before his antagonist, exclaiming, in a weak tone of voice, "Brother, are you satisfied with the blood you have already shed, or do you still thirst after more?"

To which Duke Cantab, after a moderate reflection, returned, "I have received but very insufficient satisfaction; but I have no wish to frighten you to an untimely end. Go home to your duchess, and whisper in her ear how gallantly you have behaved, but let me see your face no more." As he said this, Duke Cantab and his valet withdrew from the scene of contest, leaving Duke Ernest congratulating himself most sincerely on this happy issue of an affair from which, in the moment of

his terrors, he augured nothing less than certain destruction.

His brother being now fairly got rid of, Duke Ernest looked round the field, and then with an assumed air of self-importance, mounted his horse, and rode home to convey personally to his duchess the pleasing tidings of his own safety.

CHAP. XI.

The hero's return—Anticipation of happiness—A fatal reverse—An accident — Duke Ernest's account of his own heroism—The joy and surprize of his duchess, intermingled with cruel doubts—Her scheme to ascertain the truth—The plan procrastinated — A journey to the Fever-isle.

LEGRANGE would willingly have rode forward to communicate to the duchess the approach of his master, safe and sound, from the fearful contest, but his highness had determined to reserve for himself the pleasure of causing his spouse such an agreeable surprize.—" No doubt," said the duke to himself, " poor creature, she is deeply dis-

tressed on my account, and I will make every possible speed to relieve the anxious suspense of her mind; for, notwithstanding her assumed gaiety when I left her, I am sure she feels agitated for me."

They had now reached the mansion of the duke, when his highness, alighting, bid Legrange follow him, and hastened to the apartment of the duchess; he was already at the door, his hand upon the lock, when his curiosity was suddenly excited by the sound of voices within, which appeared to indulge in tones of merriment, the dialogue being frequently interrupted by loud peals of laughter.

"What can this mean?" asked the duke, in a whisper, and immediately applying his ear to the key-hole, endea-

voured to catch some part of the conversation. Nor was he unsuccessful in the endeavour, for, in a few moments, he distinctly heard the voice of th duchess.

"I wonder," said her highness, "whether, after all, there will be any blood shed between my poltroon of a husband, and his pot-valiant brother. Bless my soul, why a brother of mine would swallow a dozen such milk-sop fellows for a breakfast. He! he! he! What a laughable scene took place this morning, when I reminded my Adonis of the appointment he had made, and the unpoliteness of keeping a brother waiting."

"Your highness is uncommonly in spirits to-day, and I never saw you look more charming," replied another voice, which the duke instantly ascertained to

be that of Fortune, the favorite maid and confidante of the duchess. "Indeed you do bear these little domestic troubles and jarrings with your accustomed fortitude. Ah, madam, how very few there are who can aspire to resemble your highness?"

"But is not this lock too full over my left eye, Fortune?" asked the duchess, and immediately rejoined— "Well, but, Fortune; do you not think my lot a very blessed one? What a trio of husbands have fallen to my lot: I wonder which of them will claim me in heaven?"

"Oh, madam, to be sure," said Fortune, "and if they have the same taste they had in this world, they will all go to loggerheads about you."

"Then woe betide poor Ernest, my present lord and master," exclaimed the duchess — "for I am sure he will stand but a very so-so chance. He has no heart for fighting; and would much sooner walk five miles out of his way, than have a bull-dog snarl at him. If I had chanced to pick him up the first of the three, I think he would have surfeited me of the matrimonial chain; but as he comes last, I am content to bear my lot till it shall please heaven, or some angry brother, to do me the favour to call him to higher quarters."

A loud laugh followed this exclamation; the duke raised his ear from the key-hole, and began to deliberate within himself whether he should break open the door, and put the duchess to shame by convincing her he had overheard her

conversation, or whether he should behave as if nothing had happened to discompose him. To the former measure his inclination prompted him, but his heart failed him when he advanced to carry it into execution ; for his courage, when pitted against his wife, was much upon a par with his bravery when placed before the fire of a pistol ; and he would with as much courage have faced a regiment of hostile troops, as one of the duchess's frowns

While he was still loitering to bring his mind to some decision upon the subject, footsteps approached the door from within. The duke mechanically retreated, without looking behind him, and falling over Legrange, who had seated himself upon a low stool just behind his master, stretched himself and his valet at the same time prostrate on

the ground, with no inconsiderable force and bustle.

A scream was instantly heard in the apartment of the duchess, and the next moment Fortune opened the door of the room, to ascertain the cause of the disturbance, and scarcely could she forbear bursting out into a loud laugh, when she saw the duke and poor Legrange lying side by side, on the floor of the anti-room, almost stunned by the violence of the collision which had just taken place.

She had, however, prudence to conceal her inclination to merriment, and to hasten back to her mistress, to communicate to her highness what had taken place, on which the duchess hastily advanced from her apartment, and rushed to give assistance to the duke, who was

just rising from his humble posture, when his loving spouse made her appearance, to give him the aid which he required.

"Welcome home," cried the duchess. "But pray tell me all about it. Fortune, help up Legrange, and take him to your room, and give him a cordial to cheer him after his mishap; and your highness shall accompany me into my dressing-room, and give me all the particulars which I am so anxious to learn. Did you fight? Which was wounded? How came you to fall in my anti-room? Make haste, and satisfy me in every particular, for I am dying with curiosity and anxiety to be acquainted with every thing."

The duke began to revolve in his mind what manner of reply he should

make, before the duchess had half got through her questions. He would fain have informed her of what he had overheard while at the door of her apartment, but that he feared he might only irritate and excite her to acts and language such as would not be very congenial to his feelings. He determined, therefore, instead of saying directly what he could have wished to say, to deal in nothing but general hints and inuendoes, which might lead her to believe that he suspected something, without giving her any clue to ascertain that he actually knew any thing detrimental to her character, or his own vanity.

* * *

"Ah, you are a false one," said the duke, chucking her under the chin. "You are not glad to see me home again. You was in hopes that I should have been scratched off the list of hu-

man life by some infernal ball; and now I have survived it, I am sure you are disappointed."

The duchess was not deficient in sagacity. The very mode of the duke's commencement of his reply, so widely different from his accustomed manner, convinced her something was wrong. It occurred to her, immediately, that he had overheard her conversation with her woman; and the only thing she could do was, to endeavour to wipe away the impression, without seeming to have such an object in view.

"My dear Ernest," said the duchess, "I do assure you, I was overcome by the vapours when you first left me, and then I was obliged to call my woman, to bear me company; and, in order to dissipate my low spirits, I indulged my-

self in talking nonsense, and making light of the danger you was running, and laughing at the circumstances, and—and—and any thing, in short, to beguile the time, and to keep in subjection my more melancholy thoughts, which would every now and then rise uppermost, in spite of all my exertions. Heigho, Ernest; if you knew how much I have really suffered since your absence, and how rejoiced I am to see you return, you would not be unkindly doubtful."

The duke could not withstand the rhetoric of his spouse. He was too short-sighted to penetrate her views, and too credulous to disbelieve her sincerity. "How could I doubt thy affection, fair excellence?" said he, kissing her lips. "I am a jealous wretch, and deserve to be punished for my suspicions. But away with all doubts and

fears. The appointment and the danger are past, and here I am again in safety."

"But how has it all terminated, Ernest? Come, you must make haste and tell me!" exclaimed the duchess, in a tone of tenderness.

"I met my brother, who talked about apology, but I was determined to make none. Name your distance, said he. I named three paces; he intreated that it might be twenty; I agreed to twelve; gave him the first fire, he scratched my ear a little, and my finger—no, not my finger, I hurt that myself, as I was returning his fire, which I did with promptitude and courage. The ball passed through his hat; he fell, I went to render him assistance, found he was not injured; raised him from the

ground, bade him make the best of his way home again, and the next time he challenged a man of honour to the field, to take a lesson from me how to act with bravery."

"Bravo!" cried the duchess—"You have indeed been heroic in the extreme. But come now, tell me all the truth, Ernest; have you not coloured your story a little high, just to make it more palatable to me? Have you told me every thing just as it actually occurred?

"I would scorn to deceive my charmer," returned the duke, hastily. "Legrange will confirm all that I have said: he will tell you how like a hero I conducted myself all through the business, and that after the conflict, I remained master of the field."

The duchess was too sagacious to be thus easily imposed upon; at the same time, she was too politic to give her spouse the slightest additional reason to suppose that she doubted his veracity. She therefore expressed her readiness to give him credit for all that he had uttered; and then changing the subject, asked when it was his intention to make the tour of the adjoining provinces and manors, for the purpose of introducing her.

The duke, who was in the most obliging humour possible, stated his readiness to act strictly according to her directions; at the same time, suggesting that it formed part of his original plan, as soon as he had gained his mother's letters of introduction, in spite of her wishes and his own undertaking, which he had never intended to be valid,

to take his duchess over to the Fever-isle, and compel his mother to receive her as a daughter-in-law.

The duchess expressed her perfect acquiescence in this scheme, which she considered the most plausible that could be formed, but after giving her cordial assent to it, she slily added—"But what if your highness should happen to meet your brother Cantab at your mother's mansion?"

"Cantab! Well, what of him?" asked the duke, while a crimson hue, a circumstance extremely rare of occurrence, overspread his cheeks—"What of my brother Cantab? Do you think he will have a wish to fight again? Or do you think that I—I—should object to—to—to meet him again?"

"Oh not so, my dear Ernest," replied the duchess; "but I was thinking what a silly figure he would cut by your side, when he called to mind what a pretty business he had made of this duelling appointment after all his blustering, and after declaring he would not be satisfied till he had blood. Tell me, Ernest, now supposing the case had been reversed, and you had behaved in such a cowardly manner, could you ever have faced that brother again, who had caused you so much mortification? I am sure, Ernest, if I know you at all, you would go to the furthest corner of the world to shun him."

While her highness was hypothetically putting that which was really the fact, her tone, manner, and the archness of her expression, would have convinced any being of a little more than ordi-

nary penetration, that she guessed pretty nearly what were the true features and circumstances of the case. The duke, however, suspected nothing of the kind; but still he felt himself completely puzzled and confused by the suddenness of the severe attack made upon his feelings; and although it was necessary for him to say something, lest he might give a colour to suspicion, it was not until nearly a minute elapsed, that he was enabled to articulate, in a stammering tone—"No, my dearest, you guess perfectly right. I certainly, under such circumstances, never could be brought to face such a brother again. The shame would never be eradicated but with existence."

"And if we should chance to meet poor Cantab," rejoined the duchess, "do not insult him because of his in-

ferior courage, but behave to him with a becoming magnanimity which will render your name very popular amongst the tenants of the Fever-isle."

"I will," returned the duke. "Yes, yes, I will treat him with a becoming magnanimity: and as for insulting him, why, my dear duchess, I would not for thousands a year, offer any thing like an insult to him; so make yourself perfectly easy on that score."

The duchess laughed in her sleeve, as she internally felt a growing conviction that the facts of the duel were precisely the reverse of the description of the duke; but she determined, for the present, to wave all further conversation on the subject, and to take an opportunity, by bribing Legrange, to win him over to her side, and to extract from

him all the real and veritable particulars of this most mysterious meeting. This, she was well aware, it would not be difficult to accomplish, as she had before this time, prevailed upon him by the same kind of arguments very frequently to entrust her with other secrets which he had obtained, in his official capacity, belonging to the affairs of his master; and which, as a faithful valet, there cannot be a doubt that he ought to have kept very close from all the world, more especially from the ladies, and, above all, from the duchess herself.

Her highness naturally enough argued that the same causes which had produced such effects, would produce similar ones whenever they were again called into actual operation. She was resolved, however, to take an opportunity to satisfy herself as to the boasted prowess of

her husband in the field, since the circumstance was so much at war with all the usual transactions of his life, as to make it appear to her totally incredible.

Since it was mutually agreed upon between the duke and duchess, to visit the Fever-isle before they adventured into other manors, it became necessary to make the proper preparations for their journey: as it was a journey which, it was requisite, should be conducted with a considerable degree of splendour, in order to impose upon the good natured curiosity of the Fever-islanders, and to gain a few applauses as they went along. The carriage was ordered to be newly painted, and the harness newly plated; the horses were to remain for the present in the stable, and the illustrious pair were to be drawn by post horses; the servants were to be augmented and fur-

nished with new liveries, and every preparation was to be made to give the whole of the equipage an extraordinary air of magnificence. A letter was also dispatched to Narcissus, to request him to provide privately a suit of apartments for the duke and duchess, and to order the proper preparations to be made for their reception; but at the same time, he was cautioned not to drop a single word relative to the intended journey, lest the circumstances should get wind, and be wafted to the ears of the old duchess, which would doubtless thwart all the schemes of Duke Ernest and his wife upon the old lady.

The preparations for this journey causedso much bustle, and so completely occupied the thoughts of the duchess, that from the moment she had first adopted it, she did not find time to carry

into effect the resolution of questioning Legrange as to the affair of the duel. It became quite a subordinate subject the moment the journey was suggested, and was entirely lost sight of in the progress of the arrangements. A vast number of mechanics were instantly called in to give their assistance; wonderful metamorphoses were wrought in the course of a few days; all the old equipage was made to assume an appearance as new as it was lively; and a week only had elapsed, before the completion of the preparations was announced. The next day was fixed to begin the journey; at day-break, the duke and duchess left the town of Tzell, and travelled most expeditiously to the nearest sea-port, where they engaged a vessel to carry them to the Fever-isle, and after a short and pleasant passage, the illustrious pair landed in this seat of eccentricity and caprice.

CHAP. XII.

Preparations for a tour—A journey, and travellers' conversation — A midnight gambol — An unexpected and perplexing discovery—Mutual confusion—Amicable explanations—A peep at Heiferford and its students—Arrival at Bagley, and evening anticipations of morning pleasures.

THE deputies of the Fever-isle having now broken up for the winter, and postponed for some months the further transaction of public business, a little leisure time was left on the hands of Narcissus to appropriate to his own pleasures. He accordingly turned his thoughts to the journey which he had already projected

with Mahony, and determined to lose no time in carrying it into execution.

Mahony was most highly delighted at the prospect of enjoyment thus held out to him, and set himself to work so heartily to prepare his master's wardrobe and all the necessary appendages of the tour, that every thing was completed with a dispatch which was almost incredible.

The day at length arrived which was to witness the departure of Narcissus from the metropolis of the Fever-isle; and the carriages were ordered. It was broad noon, and numbers of the tenants were walking to and fro before the mansion of their lord, yet, by some strange and unaccountable perverseness of disposition, not one of all the groupe appeared to offer the slightest tribute of

respect to his rank, nor of regret at his transitory *exit.* There was not a single shout, nor even a whisper of applause; and although the multitude increased prodigiously at the moment when his highness entered his carriage, not a single boy in the whole assembly waved his cap, and no tongue cried—"God bless him!"

Narcissus, however, had been too much, of late years, accustomed to endure the insulting silence, and, even now and then, the still more insulting rebukes of the independent rabble, to be in the least moved by the absence of approbation in the present case. He was too much of a courtier to omit a little unmeaning politeness; he therefore took off his hat, and ostentatiously bowed to all the crowd which surrounded him, a movement which the

blunt tenants refrained from returning, probably because they suspected the sincerity of their lord.

The face of Narcissus was very little known throughout the Fever-isle. His career had been chiefly limited to the metropolis, where he was as easily recognized as a salmon amidst a shoal of mackarel; and as "familiarity breedeth contempt," according to the old adage, those of his tenants who were in the constant habit of seeing him thought as little of him as though he had no rank above their own, while others who dwelt more remote, were in truth tolerably polite and well bred, returning courtesy for courtesy, and tribute for tribute, wheresoever and whensoever they met him.

The truth of this assertion received

ample illustration as the illustrious travellers sped upon their journey. They did not pass a single town, but Hodge, who was little accustomed to see such a splendid retinue, doffed his hat and made his best bow, while his master, in a more graceful manner offered his obeisance. Not a country maid or dame passed by, but she dropped her rustic curtesy as a proper homage, sanctified by education and custom, to the exalted unknown; and the boys and girls in every village left off their play to shew their dutiful obedience.

All this was very pleasing to Narcissus, since he was fond of homage, like other men, and felt himself tickled to see his fellow creatures succumb before him. It was pleasing to him, because it presented such a striking and agreeable contrast to the conduct of

the tenants who resided in and about the metropolis of his manor; and so strong was the impression on his mind, that he could not keep silent.

"Mac," said he, turning to Mahony, who was lolling back nearly half asleep, in a corner of the carriage—"Mac, I never take a journey into the interior of my manor, but I go home again most horribly out of temper with myself and all the Fever-islanders who are about me. With myself, for not encircling myself with more dignity and splendour, and with the tenants near my person, because they seem so totally unmindful of whom I am, and of the degree of homage which is due to me from beings so greatly inferior to myself!"

"It is all most true, your highness;" returned Mahony, as usual echoing all

his master's sentiments, "that there is no decorum at all in your metropolis. I have even heard a washerwoman presume to sing at her laundry window while your highness passed by, and—

"Washerwoman, Mac," responded Narcissus. "That puts me in mind of old times. Do you remember the story, Mac, of the washerwoman and the lantern tied about her middle, with her petticoats fastened up under her chin? Eh, Mac, that was a prime joke, never excelled!"

"Never, indeed, your highness," replied Mahony. "I know the story well; and I remember when a foreign lord of great power visited your highness, about twelve months ago, that he laughed so heartily at the anecdote which your highness was telling him during the

midst of dinner, that for some minutes it was feared he had choaked himself, and when he recovered, he swore by all that was good, that the immortal genius who planned the joke, ought to have been immediately raised to high dignity, and to the important post of a principal adviser of your highness."

"I remember it well, Mac," returned Narcissus, who was now seated on his favourite hobby, and was not a little delighted with the circumstance; "but what was the story of the washerwoman, Mac, compared to an exploit which I myself planned and executed but a very few nights ago, not a week, I'll assure you, Mac; but you must be quite silent on the subject, or I shall get blown from one end of the mancr to the other."

Mahony bowed very gratefully, and

bound himself to silence, by the most solemn oaths, which he ever made use of, at the most sacred times, declaring that his tongue ought to be rooted out, and his body sawn asunder whenever he should offend so worthy, so good a master.

Upon this Narcissus recommenced—"You know, Mac, I have been latterly in the habit of going out about midnight with my friend Redpole, to scour the streets and beat about for a few odd adventures. One of these nights, we fell in with a brisk, sprightly, young female, closely veiled, who was tripping along at a smart pace. We accosted her, but she shunned our conversation, and quickened her speed: this coyness only served to sharpen our appetite for mischief, and we determined to make her submit to us. We accordingly kept a wary look out, until she got into a narrow dark

street, where there was no appearance of watchmen, and there we stopped her! Redpole held her mouth and her hands, while I served her as we did the washer-woman, tied her petticoats under her chin, and then we both took what liberties we chose with her, and having accomplished as much as we wished, we led her to the nearest lamp to survey her features, that we might be enabled to judge of her attractions; when d—n me, Mac, I shall never forget, who should the hussey be but Redpole's wife!"

"Redpole's wife!" echoed Mahony, in a tone of wonder and dismay, holding up both his hands, and lifting his eyes most piously to heaven, "Redpole's wife! and your highness was free with her, and Redpole himself assisted and delighted to bring his own wife to shame!"

"Exactly so, Mac," returned Narcissus; "true, as I hope for salvation. Lord! had you seen Redpole at first how he stared and stamped and swore, and then untied her petticoats again; and questioned her as to where she had been, or whither she was going? And had you seen the poor girl, how she blushed and whimpered and looked first at her husband and then at me, and stammered and hesitated, and then came out with a round story, that John had told her his master had nightly intrigues in the neighbourhood, to which she was going, and that she was prompted to venture out alone at this untimely hour of the night, to detect him and bring him home with her. And as soon as she had finished this trumped-up tale, she asked upon what errand he was going, and whom it was he had got with him.

"To save her husband's credit, I replied for him, told her who I was, and apologized for the freedoms I had taken with her before I knew her; but she no sooner heard my name, than she stopped me short in my excuses, and, with the sweetest smile imaginable, assured me she felt no rancour against me for what I had done, seeing it was all done under a mistake, and was not intended to offend her. And there was a certain arch meaning in the artful hussey's look, which determined me to repeat all my offences, if ever I could so manage as to meet her without her husband's privity; for though he so willingly aided me once, I cannot reckon on his co-operation a second time. No, no, Mac, the task must be your's to find out where and when I may recreate with her at my leisure, without fear of interruption."

"Your faithful Mahony exists but to oblige your highness," returned Mahony, and instantly resumed—"But pray, my gracious Sir, how did the affair terminate? What did poor Redpole say to his wife's excessive politeness, and accommodating disposition towards you?"

"Why, Mac, he has lived long in Rebel Realm," answered Narcissus, "and has imbibed no very inconsiderable portion of the manners and customs of the people there; so, instead of looking glum and sulky, and quarrelling both with his wife and me, as one of our straight-forward Fever-islanders would have done, he made two or three score bows to me, and then to his wife, which seemed to say, she was at liberty to make me welcome, if she thought proper, and that I was free to avail myself of her apparent good disposition towards

me. As they were both inclined to be in good humour, I insisted on their accompanying me home, and we soon settled all differences, and, as far as I know, were uncommonly happy, until Redpole made off with his wife, and I myself went, cogitating, to bed."

Narcissus had just concluded his tale, when they reached the celebrated town of Heiferford, where there were various colleges, for the purpose of instructing youths of promise and fortune, by way of preparing them for the church, the senate, and the bar. Here, the young students, and the old wiseacres, who had lived there through the better part of their lives, in conformity with an old custom, wore nothing but black trenchers on the head, and something like gowns upon their back; and in this eccentric and distinguishing dress did

they parade up and down the streets of the town, for the express purpose of quizzing the girls. And although there were good and salutary laws and regulations hung up at every college, which were excellently framed, for the purpose of preserving good order and decorum, and the moral security of the students, so many disorderly young men had found their way into these different colleges, and so many modes of shunning the obligations had been discovered, that there was much more iniquity than piety in the place, and the former still grew and gathered strength, as the latter lessened and withered away.

Here it was that Narcissus arrived at this critical juncture, and the wearers of trenchers, headed by all the chief men of the town, came out to meet Narcissus, and to do homage to his vir-

tues, and his greatness. Narcissus was well pleased with the compliment, and might, perhaps, have been induced to visit the abodes of learning, had not an angelic face, in the person of the waiter, so strongly rivetted Narcissus to the inn at which he had stopped, so that he could scarcely find time to devote to the various bodies of tenantry who came to compliment him.

Here Narcissus sojourned two days, and again set forward on his journey, and the same evening reached the residence of Hartshorn, at Bagley, where his highness was received with all the distinction which was due to him. His arrival was the signal for universal festivity and fun. Numbers of the first class of citizens were assembled together by Hartshorn, to receive and do homage to his illustrious master; fetes and fes-

tivals were planned without number; the rivulets were all converted into lakes, and the fish-ponds into oceans: there were to be mock fights by sea, (an amusement which, by the way, Narcissus was very fond of;) and there were ordered grand displays of fire-works, to gratify the public. The walks of the park were to be decked in the most fanciful style imaginable; the groves were modelled strictly after the custom and taste of Idalia, and bowers and temples of Venus were strewed about most invitingly, in sequestered spots.

Narcissus expressed his unfeigned delight in contemplating the many and superb preparations which had been made to do him honour, and complimented Hartshorn and his spouse, in very warm terms, upon the taste as well as affection which they had displayed.

"The scene," said his highness, "reminds me of the Elysium described by the old poets; and how happy should I be, my dear Lady Hartshorn, to leave the affairs of the manor in other hands, and here to rusticate all my future life with your ladyship."

Lady Louisa bowed her head most gracefully, and smilingly replied—"Your highness will soon tire of your rustic pursuits and companions. Your taste is too elegant to be warped to such a vulgar bias. You would regret the more fashionable blandishments and beauties of your gay metropolis, and would soon return with double zest to those scenes which you are now ready to relinquish."

Narcissus heard her out, and then reiterated his regret that circumstances

would not permit him to avail himself of the beauties of this enchanted spot for a permanent residence, but that he must content himself with short and occasional visits, and always go away longing for a more protracted intercourse with scenes so congenial to his feelings, so consonant to his disposition.

Lady Louisa then conducted his highness in detail through all the costly apartments which, at infinite labour and expence, had been prepared for the reception of him and his suite; and here was scope for more compliment and surprize on the part of Narcissus, who was extremely lavish in his gratitude, and as Hartshorn himself had very politely abstained from accompanying them in their private tour of inspection, his highness felt himself at liberty to be still more profuse than ever in his compli-

ments, and Lady Louisa, on her part, was far from displaying any unpolite backwardness to receive them. The good understanding was, in every sense of the word, reciprocal.

" Zounds, Mac," said Narcissus, when he found himself again alone with his *factotum*, " our host and hostess have made preparations to give us a sumptuous welcome. If all the tenants of this manor were equally sincere and ardent in their attachment to me, what a life of happiness would mine be? But alas, for one such as we find here, we shall discover a thousand who would grumble to give me a crust."

" In truth, your highness," returned Mahony—" we shall live a life of enjoyment here. To-morrow is to be a wonderful day here; a prodigious quan-

tity of company will be here to break-fast, and we are to have dancing on the green, and dancing in the house, and dancing in the gardens, and every body about the place for ten miles round, is to be compelled to dance."

"We'll give a loose to fun and frolic," cried Narcissus—"We'll think no more of care, than cynics do of pleasure. My motto shall be, taste the cup of bliss as often as 'tis filled. The few hours I have to live, I will divide between Venus and the jolly god."

Mahony praised the sentiment, as he was in duty and character bound to do, and rubbed his hands with such ecstacy as he had scarcely ever felt before; and, no sooner had he obtained his master's permission to banish himself from his presence for the night, than he flew to

a select party of gay young nymphs, who were assembled for the purpose of an evening's social merriment, and here, romping with some of the fairest of nature's flowers, he borrowed heavy requisitions from the night, and cursed the intrusive eye of the rising day, which still found him sportively toying in the lap of a beautiful Circe.

CHAP. XIII.

Morning in the country—Something about the "Mysteries of Udolpho"—Portraits of some of the higher tenants of Fever-isle—Sudden alarm —The alarm increased — Investigation of the causes, and determination of Narcissus.

THE sun had directed his golden glance from the arched windows of heaven, upwards of three hours before Narcissus could prevail on himself to quit his downy pillow; and this, indeed, he considered prodigiously early for a man of his consequence, who had for years accustomed himself to lie until at least as many hours after mid-day. But this de-

parture from his ancient custom was ascribable to the attractiveness of the scene which presented itself to his eye as he lay in his bed, and which stretching upon his view, in all the varied verdure of hill and valley, was bounded by a circling wood, whose green shadow, while it relieved the vision, gave to the whole landscape a most imposing and perfect finish. It was a scene for the pencil of the artist, and the pen of the poet; and, as fate has since singularly decreed it, it has become a scene for the pen of the humble novelist.

But as somebody of great critical repute says of a certain established romance, called "The Mysteries of Udolpho," that its beauties are so intercepted and spoiled by the introduction of so many bushes and woods, and such like, which, while they aid a

landscape, must perforce check the progress of the eye, the author of these pages hath determined wisely to avoid this error, and by leaving all bushes and trees and woods, and so forth, out of his pages, to permit the eye of his reader to wander uninterruptedly over all the beauties he can find.

Suffice it then to remark, that it was a well-timbered landscape, and as it was the property of Hartshorn, as far as Narcissus could see, it cannot be disputed that it was worth no inconsiderable sum to Hartshorn, for purposes more substantial than creating a view.

Mahony received the signal to enter his master's apartments, as was his regular custom when sent out upon a journey, in order to put the usual questions of "How did his highness

rest? It was to be hoped his highness had found a good bed," and such like interrogatories, which mean nothing more than simply—" What are your highness's commands?" For it was matter of course to expect he had some.

"Mobs of nobility came in last night and this morning, your highness," exclaimed Mahony in a delighted tone of voice, as he approached his master's bed-side, "and Lady Louisa has desired me to lay before you a list, properly illuminated with commentaries."

"Good soul," returned Narcissus, yawning and stretching himself. "But pray, Mahony, tell me what is the hour of the morning?"

"Not nine, your highness," an-

swered Mahony—" I was thunderstruck to hear your highness stirring so early, I was but just clothed."

" If it is only nine, Mac," returned Narcissus—" I'll e'en lie a little longer, and hold a colloquy with you, Mac. So you may sit down by the bedside, and read over the list you have brought me, and I have not a shadow of doubt that I shall be in ecstacy with the delineations."

Mahony obeyed, took a paper scroll which he had brought into the room, and opening it, began as follows:— " First of all stands, according to the check on the invitations, the Earl of J———. *Mem.* A very weak, yet blustering and thoughtless fellow, with as few ideas as pounds to spare; a knave who can swear most modestly, and

will never turn his back upon a good dinner at a friend's expence; a tolerable judge of horse-flesh; and one of the stable elect, who consider the crime of horse-stealing infinitely more enormous than that of murder."

"He! he! he!" cried Narcissus, interrupting Mahony, "a tolerable likeness, indeed, but the colouring is put on too harshly. Proceed."

"The next portrait, your highness, is the spouse of the redoubtable earl," replied Mahony—"a lady of quite beauty enough for a countess, but scarcely a sufficiency of good breeding: somewhat too simple and unadorned in her speech; a good share of wit, but a want of judgment in the use of it; rather too fond of her husband, and too

much addicted to those vulgar pursuits which are called domestic."

"By heaven, the countess is an angel, and there are few to be found in high life, who are worthy to rank by her side," exclaimed Narcissus.

"The third on the list, is Lord E—— S——," recommenced Mahony; "very foppish and conceited; a perfect sketch for a caricature of a bundle of insignificance. He loves himself in every habit, but most in that of a soldier, and walks uncommonly erect. The fourth is Lord H——, a peer, who goes to church more regularly in the country than in town, and disturbs all the congregation, by repeating the responses too audibly. A perfect pedant, but a very imperfect politician; a man who

reasons shallowly, and decides impetuously."

"Pretty well mixed with caustic," cried Narcissus. "But women are never celebrated for shewing mercy. Who follows in the list?"

"The Earl of C——," quoth Mahony, "an old, crusty, and conceited fellow, who cannot see a stone in his way; a famous hunter, until a serious accident checked his desire for the sport; a man fond of what good men call bad living, and bad men, good. I don't know what may be his good qualities, for I have understood that, like an incorrigible miser, he never carries them abroad, and keeps them at home so closely locked up, that his own family and friends have never yet been

allowed to see them; they are too flimsy to bear the air."

"Vastly well, indeed," cried Narcissus again. "Well, Mac, this is an amusement I had not anticipated before breakfast."

"Next appears the young and gay Lord N——," resumed Mahony. "He has enjoyed the title some few years. His father was a worthy old man, a country baronet, till he lost his seat in parliament, and then was elevated to the peerage, for his services to the government. The son, however, is but a poor *fac simile* of his honest old father. A perfect coxcomb in his manners; his new dignity for some time sat rather queerly upon him, and he shewed signs of testiness, which drew upon him some

severe mortifications; after which he contented himself to stay at home, and hear his mother rate *à la Billingsgate,* and his sisters play the fiddle. He is no great acquisition to any company; but being a mere cypher, derives all the value he does gain from his connection with some unit which may be placed by his side."

"Zounds, and the devil!" vociferated Narcissus, "have you no females on your list? Are all the culprits of the masculine gender?"

"No, here are the two Honourable Misses N——, the sisters of the last-named buck," said Mahony. "One of them a complete prude, and the other as much of a flirt. They have refused decent offers amongst reputable, but untitled country gentlemen, out of a

foolish ambition, to elevate a name which is yet in its greenness. But the consequence of their mismanagement will prove fatal to their scheme; for they have now overstood their market, and no country gentleman can be found to take them off the hands of the old dowager."

"A pretty character for the ladies," said Narcissus, raising himself on his right elbow. "But prithee, give me another sample."

"Lady M—— F—— follows close upon the heels of the last," replied Mahony. "A pretty spice of the family failing: one who could no more be faithful to her vow, than the habituated traitor can to loyalty and the law. She has made too many *faux pas* to allow the enumeration, yet not enow to strike her

off from the list of fashionables. Withal, she is a fascinating creature, and will always find admirers."

"What a pretty set of companions they have provided for me," said Narcissus, with something like a satirical smile on his countenance. "Lady Louisa has found time to blacken them all in detail; but I have heard sufficient, Mac; it all appears to be in the same strain, so I'll e'en rise, and take as early an opportunity as I can of comparing the originals themselves with the copies and commentaries."

Saying this Narcissus invited Mahony to act the part of a valet de chambre, and to assist him to put on his dressing gown; but while they were in the midst of this ceremony, a hurried noise and confusion was heard in the passages

which led to the door of Narcissus: and in a few seconds, his real valet made his appearance with looks of extreme terror, and agitated throughout his whole frame by some violent emotion. Without waiting to be asked the meaning of this abrupt intrusion, the valet stammered forth—"Sir, Sir, your highness—all the family is in the utmost grief—the Marquis of Hartshorn, the poor marquis—the servants are all running about half mad, and the visitors too."

"What the devil has happened to the marquis?" asked Narcissus, in scarcely an articulate tone of voice. "Surely he is not dead."

"Not quite, your highness," replied the valet—"not quite; but can't live; 'tis a thing quite impossible. Death has got hold of him fast."

"Run, Mahony," cried Narcissus, "fly and ascertain the truth of this, while Pierre dresses me; and hasten back, for I am much agitated."

Mahony obeyed the command of Narcissus, and hastened with all possible speed down the passages and staircase, stopping every individual he met, and questioning him as to the illness of the marquis. All agreed that he was in a most dangerous way; but to what cause this sudden illness was to be attributed, no one could give him the least clue, and he was compelled to seek the housekeeper herself.

He was not long unsuccessful: in about five minutes, he encountered her as she was returning from the chamber of the marquis, and immediately asked, in a hurried and agitated tone, evidently

savouring of excessive alarm, "what was the cause and nature of the illness of the marquis?"

"It was something sudden and alarming, for it had taken away the speech of her master;" but the housekeeper could give no more satisfactory account than this. "There was so much violence in it, as to render the most prompt and decided measures necessary, and servants have been dispatched in various directions to bring men of medicine wherever they could find them." As she told thus much, however, the old housekeeper could not forbear from bursting into tears, and launching out into a few whining apostrophes to the goodness of her dear master.

Mahony, however, scarcely staid long enough, to hear any thing beyond

the information which the old lady gave respecting the illness of the marquis; but as the eulogy with which she finished off her speech did not seem to have any thing to do with his errand, he was on tip-toe until it was concluded, and then with a sigh, and a simple monosyllable of affirmation, he took his leave, and flew to the apartment of Narcissus.

Narcissus was waiting most anxiously the return of his messenger. During the absence of Mahony he had been reflecting upon the sudden catastrophe which seemed to have befallen Hartshorn, and upon the effect it would produce on the anticipated pleasures of his visit. At first he felt something very like indignation against heaven for thus interfering to prevent the realization of his expectations of enjoyment, and cursed in his own heart, the equal law

which placed the great and the mean man under the same restrictions, and subjected them to the same pains and penalties. He would fain have indulged the unreasonable idea that the Creator should have made distinctions in the liabilities and frailties of individuals, according to the different stations they filled in society; so that while the humble felt the galling lash of affliction, the exalted might repose undisturbed in the lap of revelry and confusion, dissipating and wasting away the marrow of life in unbridled enjoyments.

The impious desire to impeach the wisdom of heaven was still warm in his heart, when Mahony returned, and found him still under the hand of the valet, who, after much difficulty and danger, had succeeded in shaving his master without materially disfiguring his illustrious

countenance; a few scars, however, still bleeding, clearly shewed the uneasiness which must have agitated Narcissus during the time of his undergoing the operation; an uneasiness which had by no means subsided when Mahony, after seeing the housekeeper, re-entered the room.

"Well, Mahony," exclaimed Narcissus—"What has happened? For God's sake make haste and tell me, for I am dying with impatience."

Mahony then communicated to his master, all the particulars which he had been enabled to collect, of the illness which had so suddenly overtaken Hartshorn, and in his recital he was once or twice interrupted by the shrugs and sighs of Narcissus, who, as soon as his *fac-totum* had got to the end of his sor-

rowful story, in a most melancholy and monotonous voice, enquired what was to be done?

A more puzzling question could not have been put to poor Mahony, who was at no time celebrated for any particular presence of mind, and who, under trying circumstances, was as utterly incapable of cool reflection, as a child of five years old. He scratched his head, looked first at Narcissus, then at the ground, and all this was to gain time, and to allow invention to reach his brain; but she came not, and when he had scratched, and looked, and gained, and given all the time he possibly could, he appeared to be just where he was.

"I'll tell you, Mahony, what must be done," resumed Narcissus, and the eyes of Mahony sparkled with pleasure at

the prospect of being relieved from his perplexity—" We will go to Hartshorn, and if we find him really so ill as to compel us to abandon all our plans of enjoyment; as the house of sickness is by no means the most congenial to my taste of any, why then, Mahony, we'll bid him good bye, and go elsewhere."

" Most wisely resolved," exclaimed Mahony—" For we can do the marquis no good if we do sacrifice our time and pleasures to him. And besides, sir, it would be monstrous in him to expect and demand any thing of the kind from you, his lord and master. Your highness has decided illustriously."

" Do I not always decide illustriously?" asked Narcissus; and as he spoke, a blush from the fountain of shame

sprang forth, and was about to make a settlement upon his cheek, when vanity rushed out of his cell, and by the terror of his look, the determined manner of his gait, and the fearful expression of his attitude, drove back the timid effusion to its native source, where it mingled again with the narrow and half-dried stream. It was a long time since a blush had ventured to shew itself upon the illustrious cheek of Narcissus, and, if it had ventured to fix itself there for a moment, the Feverisle would have been convulsed with wonder at the sight of a phenomenon portentous of some mighty events.

Mahony himself was a little struck with astonishment, but he did not forget himself so far as to hesitate in his answer, but giving a prompt affirmative to the question, he prepared to follow

his master out of the apartment, with a view to seek Lady Louisa, to ascertain the precise extent of the calamity which had visited her illustrious spouse, and to carry into effect the other purposes which Narcissus contemplated, in case it should be found impracticable to indulge in any of the anticipated enjoyments.

Nor let the reader cavil at Narcissus for this apparent indecorum, in even entertaining a desire to make the seat of Hartshorn the scene of sportive festivity, at the moment when its possessor was lying balanced between life and death. It was nothing more than the natural effect of an unquenched thirst after pleasure, in every shape, and an unfettered indulgence in every pursuit which the bosom could entertain. He had naturally grown so completely in love

with himself, and so perfectly devoted to the chace after selfish enjoyments, as to shut out from his heart the more noble and generous feelings of our nature; and how many are there in the lower walks of life, who, from a natural disposition, by no means the consequence of education, are equally the slaves of similar principles, exclusively devoted to their own pleasures, without consultation or consideration for the feelings of others! And although Narcissus was the lord of a manor, and strode away with unexcelled pomp, when he chose to array himself in his official glory, yet after all, he was nothing more than—*man!*"

CHAP. XIV.

Sudden alarms—Fears of death—Sudden conversions—The arrival of an ecclesiastic—Confessions—Some insight into the life of a great man—Sudden interruption, and its consequences—Departure of Narcissus.

It was about sun-rise on this eventful morning, when Lady Louisa was aroused from a sweet slumber, and ambrosial dreams, by the groans of her husband. She started up in bed, and in a voice of extreme terror, inquired the cause of this sudden and serious alarm; and poor Hartshorn had just strength sufficient to say he was taken dreadfully ill, and to point to his head, when he

fainted away, and Lady Louisa, in a state of dreadful agitation, loudly rang her bell for assistance, and spread the first alarm through the house.

Hartshorn was soon recovered from his fainting fit by the application of a few stimulants; but scarcely had he got the better of one, than he relapsed, and this continued for upwards of an hour, when the faintness disappeared, and was succeeded by dreadful spasms and convulsive agitations, both of the head and the breast, which appeared to inflict upon the poor sufferer, the most intolerable anguish.

"I shall die, Louisa," faintly exclaimed Hartshorn, as Louisa held his dry hand, and kindly inquired how he felt himself.

Lady Louisa shed abundance of tears, and upbraided her spouse with unkindness, in taking upon himself thus, without ground or justice, to wound her feelings—"You will not die of this day's illness," answered her ladyship. "You will live for many years to come."

"No, no," said the sufferer—"I shall die, Louisa, I am sure! I am very sure I shall die! I feel something which tells me so."

"You alarm me intolerably, my dear lord," replied her ladyship—"Is it possible you can be so superstitious as to think thus without cause. Nevertheless, my lord, to indulge you a little in your foolish apprehensions, and looking at the black issue which you have sketched, what commands have you to

give me, for be assured I shall most religiously fulfil every particular of your dying request."

"Dying request," echoed Hartshorn, in a voice scarcely intelligible—"I have no dying request to make, only let me be buried plainly."

"I must send for instant assistance, if it is thus you treat the matter," said Lady Louisa, violently ringing the bell again, and giving orders to the servant, who instantly entered the apartment, to dispatch couriers on swift horses, to fetch the best of medical assistance from all the towns within forty miles, and to lay particular stress on the necessity of a return from the greatest distance before night.

Her ladyship having taken this step,

began her endeavours to wean her spouse from the idea that he should die, dwelling upon the absurdity of giving way to such discouraging thoughts, which could only have the effect of unnerving him, and rendering him unfit to bear the pain of his indisposition. She assured him she saw no danger, and vowed that her affection would have discerned it if there had been any.

At this moment, unfortunately, a renewed fit attacked the marquis, which had the effect of subduing all the rhetoric of Lady Louisa, and it was at this juncture, that Narcissus and Mahony entered the apartment, having previously obtained permission of her ladyship. The piercing groans of Hartshorn were the only greetings with which Narcissus was received, and from such an unusual welcome, he shrank with evident symp-

toms of apprehension and alarm, which were not much alleviated when his glance fell on the pale and ghastly countenance of Hartshorn.

"My dear lord is extremely ill," said Lady Louisa, who marked the altering countenance of their visitor—"Your highness may perceive that this attack, though so recent, has reduced him to a situation at once most critical and alarming to my susceptible bosom."

"I shall die—I am sure—very sure—I shall die!" stammered Hartshorn, in his intervals of ease, with faint and scarcely intelligible tone. After a pause of a few moments, for neither Lady Louisa nor Narcissus felt the slightest inclination to reply, Hartshorn resumed—"Pray send for a spiritual man."

"A what?" asked Narcissus, in a tone of horror—"The disorder has touched his brain to a certainty. Oh, Lady Louisa, send for a bottle of hock, or a goblet of ratafia; *spirituous*, but not *spiritual* draughts, will tend to his recovery. A spiritual man! Poor Hartshorn! He is indeed in peril."

Hartshorn had heard all this reply from the lips of Narcissus, for the intensity of the pain had partially subsided, and he immediately made the following answer, in as connected and audible a manner as he could. "Sir, your highness cannot feel as I feel, unless you were afflicted as I am afflicted. I shall surely die: let me have an opportunity to make my peace with heaven, for my sins are many."

Narcissus, on this, was more than ever

convinced that Hartshorn was not in his right mind, but he did not venture to make any further remark which might have the effect of irritating or discomposing him. To Mahony, however, who stood close at his elbow, he took an opportunity to whisper his conviction of his insanity, and expressed a wish that they were safe away from the unpleasant scene.

In the mean time, Lady Louisa had been using her utmost endeavours to soothe her spouse, to remove the impression of danger, which seemed to have taken such deep root, and to dissuade him from his professed intention of sending for an ecclesiastic to console him; but her efforts proved utterly unavailing, Hartshorn began to cry out more vociferously than ever, until Narcissus and Mahony joined to persuade

her that a compliance with this whim of a disordered intellect, might do something towards setting him to rights again.

Her ladyship immediately acquiesced in the plausibility of the opinion, and dispatched a messenger to the neighbouring market town, where there lived an old clergyman, who had hobbled and limped through the professional duties of his situation for upwards of forty years, and, during the whole of this period, had contrived to keep up a tolerable character, as a sportsman, and a jolly, good tempered old fellow.

Such was the man to whom the care of souls was intrusted, and this spiritual Esculapius, backed and supported by his diploma of divinity, performed all the exercises of his office to the letter,

not caring to trouble himself about the *spirit*. He was not long in obeying the summons of Lady Louisa; the honour of the visit was, doubtless, a more powerful incitement than any better motive; and this was so efficient as to bring him to the mansion of Hartshorn, within five and thirty minutes from the dispatching of the message by Lady Louisa.

Narcissus and Mahony were still in the apartment of the invalid, who was labouring under an anguish almost intolerable, when the minister made his appearance. The countenance of Hartshorn instantly brightened up, as much as that of Narcissus fell, at the sight of the new visitor, whose technical looks of gravity, seemed to portend nothing short of the death of the marquis.

Seating himself by the bed-side of

Hartshorn, after the usual ceremony had been gone through, the vicar began his exhortations, in the most solemn tone imaginable, calling upon the agonized sufferer to declare his faith, and to confess his sins to heaven.

Hartshorn, after a short pause, groaned out with some hesitation the following reply—" My faith is—is—is—the same as yours."

No doubt the peer considered that he had admirably got over the difficulty, without committing himself; and the ecclesiastic, who might have considered such an answer as an insolent one, from any meaner individual, affected to be perfectly contented with it from the great man, considering it monstrously indecorous to be too nice in the examination of a person of fashion.

Accordingly the grave divine having duly pondered upon the answer, expressed himself abundantly satisfied, declared the noble invalid to be in the high road to salvation, and exhorted him, by way of making sure of heaven, to make audible confession of his sins.

There was certainly something not quite orthodox in this mode of proceeding, in a member of that church which had affected to cast off all papal forms and ceremonies; but it is probable that curiosity got the better of the churchman's recollection in this instance, and impelled him to step beyond the exact line of his ecclesiastical duty. The peer, on the other hand, was not in a situation to weigh nicely what might, or what might not lie within the province of his interrogator. Looking, as he himself believed, death fully in the

face, he had no inclination to quarrel either with heaven or its minister; summoning up therefore, his diminished stock of fortitude, he faintly responded—

"If I must, reverend friend, I will—I will—confess. In the first place, I had better begin perhaps, with my religious sins. I have never gone to church regularly, to set a good example to my tenants, my servants, and my family. I have never practised private devotion. I have never had prayers said in my household. I never thought of God at all, not even so far as to form an opinion whether there was one or not."

Here the divine held up his hands, as if transfixed with horror and astonishment; and followed up the motion with a corresponding ejaculation, while the shivering Hartshorn, believing he saw his

doom in the glance of despair cast upon him by the priest, groaned most deeply. On which the ecclesiastic, with a view to re-assure him, gave him more words of hope and consolation, and then most kindly desired him to proceed.

"Next," stammered the peer—"I pro—pro—proceed to my mo—mo—moral offences. I have been something addicted to—to—you know what I mean."

"Oh yes, my lord," returned the priest, with great rapidity of utterance—"the ladies—the ladies—your lordship means the ladies."

The peer nodded assent, and went on—"I have been a great—a very great—sinner that way, your reverence, and it hangs heavy on me now."

The ecclesiastic shook his head very significantly, and briefly replied—"Ah, my lord, we have all our frailties that way, but heaven is merciful."

"Thank your reverence for the hope," exclaimed Hartshorn, in a firmer tone of voice—"but I have not confined my amours to one description of females, I have intrigued with wives and daughters of great men who were my friends and visitors; I have made free with widows, and also with my lady's maids, and the daughters of my tenants. Oh Lord, mine is a precious catalogue of sins of the amorous complexion!"

"Let us pass on to others, then," said the ecclesiastic, who perceived Narcissus and Mahony tittering at each other, at the recapitulation of intrigues, which the peer was making—"Let us

go to another description of failings, if your lordship have any on the records of your memory."

Hartshorn sighed vehemently, and recommenced—" I have been a great drinker; but a great deal of this crime ought to be placed to the account of—" "Whom?" interrupted Narcissus, hastily, and instantly proceeding—" Not mine, I am sure! No, no, not to my account, my lord."

This interruption caused no small share of confusion in the apartment:—the invalid peer, who, in the excess of his devotional ardour, had completely forgotten that any person was in the room, except his clerical attendant and himself, now fainted and fell back on his pillow, so greatly was he overpowered by the recollection of his own unguard-

edness; Lady Louisa loudly screamed, and running to Narcissus, instead of her husband, assured him in the most positive terms, that her dear lord never meant to impeach the righteousness of his highness, but she was sure, made allusion to some other individual, while the priest was silently applying hartshorn to the nose and temples of the patient.

After a few minutes' persuasion, Lady Louisa and Mahony succeeded in prevailing upon Narcissus to believe that Hartshorn did not apply the censure to him, and to quit the apartment, lest he might hear any thing further which might sound gratingly on his illustrious ears.

"Zounds, Mahony," said his highness—"I am but half satisfied about this business; I have still some suspi-

cions that he meant me in his allusion. At any rate, Mac, as this is but a dull house now, and all the company is gone, and there is very little prospect of any fun and frolic, I think we may just as well be jogging, and try to find out some more pleasant abode to waste away a few weeks at."

To this, Mahony felt not the slightest objection, for he began to think as his master did, that a longer tarrying here, would indeed be a cursed bore. He accordingly concurred most heartily in the propriety of moving quarters without further delay, and hastened, with something beyond his common rate of rapidity, to give orders for the immediate preparation of all the equipage, for the recommencement of their journey.

Mahony had scarcely left the room.

before Lady Louisa came skipping into the presence of Narcissus, followed by the ecclesiastic, with his prayer book under his arm. "Your highness—your highness," exclaimed her ladyship, as she danced up to his highness—"My lord is recovered. The terror which seized him, lest he should have given you offence, banished the spasms, and he has revived from the fainting fit as well as ever."

The ecclesiastic repeated the good news, but borrowed a little of the credit of the recovery, by attributing it to the consolatory change which his exhortations had made upon the mind of the marquis, and which had led the way to the restoration of his bodily health. And as the divine concluded, he retired at the express desire of her ladyship to the housekeeper's apartment, to regale

himself with such delicacies as might be set before him.

It is probable, that a great portion of the joy which animated the countenance of Lady Louisa, when she bounced into the room, to communicate to Narcissus the intelligence of her consort's recovery, was attributable, not so much to the gratifying nature of the news itself, as to the hope which arose in her mind, that the festivities which had been suddenly abandoned, the moment her lord was taken ill, might now be revived, and that she might not be compelled to surrender so soon, the prospects of gaiety and pleasure in which she had indulged.

What then was the consternation of her ladyship, when Narcissus, after congratulating her upon the happy change

in her lord's health, proceeded to inform her that he had given orders for immediate departure, inasmuch as in the present situation of affairs, he considered himself merely an intruder, and that he meant to postpone the residue of his visit until the complete re-establishment of Hartshorn's health.

The news was a thunder-stroke to her ladyship's hopes and expectations. She tried all her eloquence to dissuade his highness from his purpose of resuming his journey so speedily, but Narcissus had received such a shock from the first appearance of Hartshorn in an apparently dying state, from the introduction of the ecclesiastic, and his subsequent exhortations, and from the mysterious allusion of the invalid himself, which he had rather too prematurely interrupted, that he had not the least relish for any pro-

traction of his visit at Bagley. He was therefore, proof against all Lady Louisa's rhetoric; the voice which had been accustomed to charm him in the most uneven times, now lost all its power, and his resolution withstood all the assaults of her ladyship's charms of person, and oral and optical expression.

The utmost which Lady Louisa could prevail upon Narcissus to accede to, was to make one more visit to the apartment of Hartshorn, who, she assured him, was only suffering under extreme weakness; but, to shew his highness that the disorder had left him, her ladyship assured him that she had dispatched messengers in every direction, to send back the medical aid, which, in the first paroxysm of terror, she had ordered to be called in. Upon this, Narcissus mustered up courage to enter once more the

abode of sickness, and to assure Hartshorn, who was now enabled to make his own apologies for the apparent mystery of his allusion, that he was convinced it had no reference to himself, but that he was resolved to come again to Bagley, on the first opportunity, to make ample atonement for the sacrifice of pleasure which he had now consented to make.

Hartshorn expressed himself delighted with the condescension of Narcissus, Lady Louisa affected to be so also, and Narcissus, a few hours afterwards, was on his road to a distant part of the manor, to visit a gallant tenant who had lately suffered severely in defence of the estate.

CHAP. XV.

A sad silence sadly interrupted—Thoughts upon death—The ne plus ultra *of flattery—A terrible truism which knocks down complimentary sophistry—Change of scene—Arrival at the seat of the Lord of Copperisle—Pleasanter reflections—A parrot may not peck at a lord of a manor.*

NARCISSUS and Mahony had been some hours on their journey, before the former had condescended to utter a single word; and the latter was too well-bred, and withal, was too diffident to break a silence which seemed to be intended by his master. Each, doubtless,

was engaged in a soliloquy with his own thoughts, for even men of this stamp may be supposed to soliloquize now and then, when any particular circumstances arise to lead to such a result. The countenance of Narcissus was certainly of a most melancholy contour during this pause, as if some mighty solemn ideas were sublimely marching up and down his mind; and when, at last, his highness found leisure and inclination to summon words to his assistance, to the amazement and horror of Mahony, he thus expressed himself.

" I never thought so much of death, since the visit I made into the vault, with Sir Harry Halshallow, and then, to be sure, I was most confoundedly frightened for three or four weeks: Zounds, I did not sleep a wink! Could not sleep for the soul of me! And yet

after all, the old codgers say I must die. My grandfather died; so did my grandmother! my father, to be sure, wears well, and my mother. Must I die, Mac?"

This was certainly a most wise and necessary question; for however certain meaner men may be of death; however firmly the conviction may be impressed on their minds that they must follow the steps of their forefathers, and that the grave will cover them all, Narcissus might very well be allowed to entertain a few doubts whether or not he was to be included in the common lot of mortals, since it was a very usual practice with those parasites by whom he was surrounded to endeavour to make him believe that he was immortal, and, in every respect, equal to a god. The natural consequence of these hints and

complimentary phrases was to stagger his highness's opinion with regard to his own liability to death, and as the contrary was a sentiment of a very agreeable complexion, and most fully consonant to his own wishes on the subject, no cynic will impeach his wisdom for applying to Mahony for some information.

"Die!" echoed Mahony, trembling to his very toes at tne bare suggestion of the idea—"Die! your highness die! may heaven forbid! Why, what wretch on earth, your highness, would presume for a single moment to cherish such a traitorous and abominable thought?"

Mahony was a very *reynard* in compliment: the sly fellow never once flatly asserted that his master would not die; but by a kind of circumlocutory

reply, made up of interjections, ejaculations, and tagged with a most comprehensive interrogatory, evaded the plain question. The evasion would have been evident to any person beneath the rank of Narcissus, and would have been interpreted, in a sense directly opposite to that in which his highness considered it expedient to take it. But Narcissus did not condescend to scrutinize the import of the words too minutely, but contenting himself with applying them in the way best calculated to give him pleasure, considered the reply as confirmatory of his own immortality.

"Yet I had a sister who died!" ejaculated Narcissus, after a short pause—"And my uncles, and aunts, and cousins have almost all died?"

There was something in the tone which indicated a deep despondency, and a thousand times did Mahony curse inwardly the unfortunate visit to Bagley, and the sudden indisposition of Hartshorn which, there was no doubt, had led to this gloomy train of reasoning. Indeed Mahony not only did this on his master's account, but in some degree on his own; for he felt his own mind rather saddened by the continually returning picture of the sick room, the ecclesiastic, and all the black catalogue of preparations for an after state. These things had been, in general, so totally excluded from all share in his thoughts as well as his master's, that now they did come upon his recollection with a sudden and powerful rush, he sat very unquietly under the impression which, in spite of himself, they had made on his feelings.

"Uncles, and aunts, and cousins, almost all dead," thought Mahony,—and then fancy began to wander among his own relations and friends, to find out what havoc death had made there, but while he was thus occupied, Narcissus once more interrupted him.

"If all my family die, Mac, what is to preserve me?" And as he said this, he looked very stedfastly at Mahony, while waiting for his answer.

But Mahony was as much at a loss as his master to discover some reason for his escaping the lot of his friends; and cunning and ready as he generally was in his replies, it was some time before he could sufficiently recover his recollection to answer—"Anciently, Sir, we are told that men eminent for

virtues were rewarded by immortality, and, if immortality be the reward of virtue, your highness is certain of it."

Narcissus shook his head somewhat mournfully and sighed, "Ah, Mac, these were good times, but you and I did not live in them."

This piece of sound logic upset poor Mahony in a moment. Flattery was of no avail against it; in vain did he rack his brain, and endeavour to find out something to say in answer, but it was all to no purpose. He hemmed, blew his nose, affected a cough, put his head out at the window for a little air, and when all this had been done inwardly confessed that this death was a subject which of all others he least understood, that he had so little practised arguments upon it, that he was quite at a loss, and

that he never wished to meddle with it again as long as he had life, and other topics to talk upon. And all this had passed through his mind, without Narcissus having once uttered a syllable, so that at the end of the cogitation, poor Mahony found himself not a whit better off than he was at the beginning.

A circumstance, however, at length occurred, which effectually relieved Mahony from his dilemma; they had for the last hour, been winding through a country darkened with smoke, and the surface of which was covered with coals; on every side of them now appeared innumerable fires and furnaces, and mountains of the mineral fuel, and immense kilns; and the clanking of chains, and the massive strokes of mighty hammers were heard in every direction. All this novelty had induced Narcissus to put

his head out at the window for some miles, and every now and then to violate the third commandment of the decalogue, such was his wonder at what he beheld.

They had just passed round an angle in the road, and the road itself was scarcely eight feet in width, when on the side of a mountain blackened all over with the fumes of the burning lava, which covered the valley, a well built mansion caught the eye of Narcissus, who, completely losing the recollection of the queer subject which had so recently been discussed, drawing in his head and turning to Mahony, with his usual rapidity of manner, inquired—"Look, Mac, look yonder! Does that house belong to our friend Copperisle?"

After muttering internally a thousand

blessings upon the house, for making its appearance at this critical moment, when he stood most in need of interference, Mahony hastily looked out against the side of the hill, and then taking a huge map out of one of the pockets of the carriage, began to make very deep calculations as to the latitude and longitude of the place before them; and when he had spent somewhat more than ten minutes in this employ, he, like a true son of trigonometry, brought it to the clearest result imaginable; and, folding up the map at the instant he was speaking, replied — "Your highness has judged with the most surprizing accuracy."

"D—n me, that is Copperisle's," returned Narcissus, in a transport of joy; and his highness never swore but when he was under the influence of some very powerful feeling which made

him forget his dignity for the moment. Then pausing a moment, and resting his head on his hand, his highness resumed—"Let them drive thither. We will dine and get drunk with Copperisle to day, if I live, for he is a gallant fellow, and I owe him some very especial mark of my condescension and gratitude."

Narcissus possibly meant to intimate that to get drunk with Copperisle was an especial mark, &c. &c. and that Mahony agreed with his master in sentiment may be gathered from the uniting of his hands, the look of rapturous surprize, and the joyful ejaculations of "Gracious condescension!" "Happy Copperisle!" "Rich reward of bravery!" which instantly followed the determination of Narcissus.

Mahony himself was as much delighted as Copperisle could have been at the idea of so sweet as well as unexpected a pause from the fatigues of travelling; for Mahony was one who was uncommonly attached to all the little indulgencies of life, and was never so free from care as when his head was full of wine. It has been asserted that, at these times also, his heart was generally penetrated with generosity; but they certainly libel him most egregiously who accuse him of admitting such an uncourtly stranger within the doors of his bosom at any time. Mahony might be happy; he might enjoy himself most enviably; but to suppose him really impressed with a sincere desire to extend the latitude of his enjoyment, and to give others a participation; to imagine that ever he strove to benefit, or bless any human being beyond himself, would be

too gross an injustice to him, too flagrant a violation of probability, to be received or believed for a moment.

A very short time sufficed to bring the travellers to the gate of Copperisle's mansion, for Narcissus had guessed, and Mahony calculated his latitude and longitude correctly; and the noble Lord of Copperisle who had just furnished himself with an artificial, as a bad (though the best) substitute for his real flesh and blood leg, limped out to meet and congratulate his visitors, whom the *avant* couriers had announced some time before they appeared.

" My Lord of Copperisle," exclaimed Narcissus, " I am come to pay you a visit, to purify myself as far as I am able, from the suffocating effects of the car-

bonic atmosphere which fills all the regions below you. Can you entertain us, and give us house for the night, my Lord?"

"Your highness does honour to my humble mansion to command it," returned Copperisle, bowing very low as he spoke—"No pleasure to Copperisle can equal that of laying all his stores of entertainment at the feet of your highness. Command you servant to the uttermost."

Mamony was as much delighted as Narcissus at the prospect of a little pleasure; and Copperisle seemed as eager to cater for their taste in every pleasure, as they could possibly be to partake of it. The house was large, and fully capable of entertaining a large

party; the neighbourhood, if not so numerously peopled with illustrious families as the metropolis of the Fever-isle, could, notwithstanding, boast of a good proportion of beauty, rank, and respectability; and there was not an individual who would not feel proud to be noticed and invited to the hall by the Lord of Copperisle.

Not that the Lord of Copperisle had at any time, any extraordinary share of personal fascinations, but he had shone very conspicuously, having achieved many gallant exploits both in the field of Venus and of Mars. He was equally renowned in love and in war; many hearts of fair damsels, not even excepting those who were wedded in Hymen's bands, had he led away captive; and many times had he, with desperate

courage, braved danger in the testy fight, and snatched away everlasting laurels from the cannon's mouth. In a late affair of greater glory than advantage to the Fever-isle, he had most successfully contributed his full share to the brilliant issue, when towards the close of a day of eternal renown, by a straggling stroke one of his legs was carried off, and he was compelled to purchase his share of the splendor, at the loss of a limb. But although he lost a limb, and consequently by so much lessened the amount of his attractions, in the usual way, he in truth gained new attractions from the circumstance, even in the eyes of those who usually judge differently, measuring worth by perfection of appearance ; and he was now without doubt a person of much more universal esteem and reputation than he

had been reckoned during any preceding part of his life.

"Copperisle!" said Narcissus, shaking him heartily by the hand — "My dear Copperisle, but I really am glad to see you. Come, now, I want you to tell me all about it; so after dinner we'll have it—how the bullets came flying about, like hail—and how the bayonets came pricking—and how the drums of the enemy beat a retreat—and how you and all the brave fellows of mine went at them like blood-hounds at wolves—and how they looked when they ran away, and how you looked when you followed them. Zounds, I am on fire to hear all about it."

"All my limited powers to entertain your highness," returned Copperisle,

bowing much lower than he had done before, "shall be taxed and strained to the very uttermost. I will tell you the history of all my battles, and throw your highness the narrative of my intrigues into the bargain, if it will afford you any amusement. And as I know your highness to be fond of pleasure, I will invite all the most respectable of my neighbours to a masquerade to-morrow night, and all the sources of enjoyment which lie hereabouts will I open to your highness.

Mahony congratulated himself most cordially on having stepped into such good quarters, while Copperisle was promising such profusion of joy; and Narcissus himself could not help chuckling secretly, and praising his own sagacity which first induced him to deter-

mine to pay a passing visit to Copperisle. Putting his mouth close to the ear of Mahony, he could not refrain from whispering, as they passed into an elegant apartment, which commanded one of the most romantic views the imagination can conceive—"Egad, Mac, this was a happy thought of mine! I'm d——d glad we got away from Hartshorn's at the moment we did! Here we shall see something like fun and frolic, if—"

And here the whisper ceased, and a sudden gloom overspread the countenance of Narcissus, for the recollection of the scene in the sick chamber suggested itself in such lively colours, as to strike a deep and involuntary horror to the heart of his highness. The fatal "if," also struck like a knell on the ears of Mahony, who felt terribly alarm-

ed lest he should be drawn into another such an argument as that in which he had been compelled to participate in the earlier part of the day. For a few seconds, he scarcely dared to raise his eyes to his master's countenance, and, when he did, he gathered very little consolation from the glance, for he unfortunately gazed at the critical moment when Narcissus was most under the influence of the apprehension which had so sudden and powerfully taken possession of his mind.

Narcissus and Mahony looked at each other in silent astonishment at their own singular despondency, and this discovery of each other's weakness would doubtless have mutually tended to aggravate it, but at this instant, Copperisle directed the attention of Narcissus to a most beautiful specimen of the par-

rot kind, which hung at the window. The beauty of the plumage so completely engrossed the attention of his highness, that every other thought was banished for the time; but as his highness advanced his hand to touch the gay feathers, the silly bird, ignorant of the mighty honor intended to be conferred by this touch, made a very rude and violent snap at the fingers of Narcissus, at the same, exclaiming in an almost unintelligible jargon— " Get out, saucy beast." This indelicacy on the part of the bird put Copperisle completely out of countenance, the more especially as Narcissus seemed to frown upon the saucy chatterer ; but the matter was soon compromised by an instant trial of the parrot, who, by the unanimous sentence of the whole trio was ordered to be deprived of food and water during

the residue of the day; and to have a large baize thrown over his cage for a week, to teach him a salutary lesson not to make too free, in future, with such illustrious stars of mankind as Narcissus.

CHAP. XVI.

Glowing description of a battle—Mahony's oratory—The eloquence of Narcissus—Something about care and reason—A specimen of dreaming—Morning—The praise of brandy, and a plan of Narcissus to knight it—The scheme thwarted—A wager—The sporting renown of Narcissus eternally established.

COPPERISLE was to the full as good as his word, for no sooner did the bottle begin to circulate, on the removal of the cloth, than he commenced the tale of glorious enterprize which he had promised to Narcissus. "Your highness would have been delighted," said Coppericle, "to see the glory of the contest.

This table is the field; the decanters are the different commanders of the divisions; the glasses are the subordinate officers; the olives are the riflemen; the oranges are the infantry; the pines are the artillery; the almonds, and the filberds, and the melons are the enemy. The commander of the Rebel-realm is in that sugar-basin, surveying the conflict; your commander is this beautiful apple. At the crack of this nut, your troops and your allies (the black grapes and the green ones) roll down upon the hostile almonds and filberds; your pines attack their melons; now their almonds attack your oranges; glass falls on glass; and now a decanter cracks; see, the enemy flies; hurra, the victory is our's!"

"Glorious!" exclaimed Narcissus—"Wonderful!" shouted Mahony. And then Narcissus and Mahony looked at

each other with surprising wonder, and said, *inter se*, "how vastly clear he put it! One might imagine one's self an actual party in the field of battle."—"I was always fond of oranges, olives, and pines," added Narcissus, in a louder tone, "and from this moment, I will never dine without the whole three. But this leg, my lord; this leg was a sad, sad affair. I wish money could buy another, my lord; but money won't do every thing, it won't buy legs!"

"But it will, your highness," replied Copperisle; "and, by the blood of my ancestors, it has bought me a better leg than the one I lost. That, your highness, was subject to casualties without number; if I stepped aside, I sprained my ancle; if I trod in a hole, I wrenched my foot; the gout would oftentimes attack the toe, the cramp the calf, and, the

rheumatism the knee: if my boots were wet through, I was liable to take cold; I have been bitten by a dog and scratched by a cat, a hundred times, between the heel and the ham; I have cut it, and it has bled; my foot has been blistered with walking; and it has been miserably cold through the live long night in December. Now I have a substitute which will not bleed when cut, nor ache when touched; which will defy gout, cramp, and rheumatism; rough roads and the winter's cold; a dog may bite it, and I shall feel no injury; if I break it, it will cause me no pain to mend or amputate it; neither cold nor heat will annoy it; and I can take it off at pleasure, and resume it without pain. If it is not quite so active as its original, what matters it? I can ride on horseback as well; I can sit in my carriage as easily; it affects

neither my vision, speech, smell, nor hearing; and only abridges one ramification of feeling. If your highness will not feel ashamed of seeing a lame soldier, believe me, I shall never be heard to utter a complaint on the subject."

"Your lordship is quite a philosopher as well as a hero," exclaimed Mahony, who received the cue from his master to say something, and who could not, at a moment's notice, produce any very fine or very elaborate touches of language; and then, taking his glass in his hand, after modestly asking permission of Narcissus, by the interchange of expressive glances, he added—"My lord, my lord—may the splen—splendour of your leg"—

"Splendour of what?" interrupted Narcissus, in an angry tone of voice,

which most completely overthrew all the composure of poor, stammering Mahony.

"Leg! leg—I mean merits," stuttered Mahony, as soon as he had partially recovered himself—"May the splendour of your merits be conveyed down to the *legs*—legs—I would say, my lord, to the admiration of remotest posterity; and may unborn tongues, no, not tongues, my lord, may unborn generations learn to bless your lordship's leg—that is, your lordship's valour and glorious achievements in defence of the Fever-isle!"

If Narcissus had bestowed a pension of a thousand a year upon Mahony, in addition to all the sinecures, emoluments, and sources of profit which he at present enjoyed, poor Mac would not have felt

more sincere delight than when he found himself at the conclusion of this most perplexing speech, which had made him perspire to the very toes, and curse the deficiency of his tongue at least a hundred times during the course of it.

Narcissus, whose head began to be a little affected, for Copperisle's wine was overpoweringly strong, determined by an exertion of matchless eloquence, to wipe away the disgrace which attached to himself from the incapacity of his substitute; without, therefore, allowing Copperisle time to make a reply to Mahony's compliment, his highness began —" My dear fellow, never mind Mac, he's a little out in the head sometimes— he and his legs may march to the devil, while I accost you, my lord. You deserve great glory and favor, very great glory and favor indeed. I understood

your leg was buried; and I don't accord in that circumstance. No, it is my intention and my will, and I mean to issue a pro—pro—clam—ation (d——d long word!) about it: because to do you glory, I will have it brought home in a state barrel of pickle; and I will have it buried in my great ca—ca—cathe—dral, with a long procession. For I am determined to pay the same honours to your leg, that I would have done to your whole body, which I hope will be long preserved without pickling, if that ball had happened to have hit you too high. So, my Lord of Copperisle, this is my pleasure upon the business; but we will confer further upon this matter, at another opportunity."

Copperisle was certainly the most sober of the three; and therefore, was

able to perceive that his guests were not much in the mood for rational argument; he consequently, very prudently determined not to trouble reason much on the present occasion. He accordingly made his best bow, and very laconically returned thanks for the condescension of Narcissus, and declared that as his leg had always been at his highness's disposal, while it was an attached member of himself, it was equally so now that it was detached; and then Copperisle filled his glass to the brim, and drank,—"Immortality to Narcissus."

Narcissus was too far gone to allow the intrusion of any gloomy thoughts or recollections, at this period; or else this very toast, well as it was intended, might very probably have touched the string, which produced so much dis-

cordance before. Now, however, it did not revive a single unhappy recollection; his highness was scarcely sensible of the purport of the words, but as matter of course, setting it down that they conveyed a compliment, he hiccupped two or three times, and then, with great acuteness returned—"Thank you, Copperisle, thank you! God bless you, Copperisle, I know you do."

There was for some time a dead pause in the conversation, during which the glass circulated with such briskness as completely to destroy every vestige of care from the minds of the whole party. Now care and reason being pretty closely allied, whenever care entirely departs from the abode of human feeling, it may be fairly gathered that reason has, at least, given notice to quit: and so it was on the present occasion; reason began to reel

and stagger as care was drowning beneath the swelling torrents of the Tuscan grape; and the very instant the latter had breathed her last gasp, the former kindly flapped her pennons, and winged her way to a sphere more congenial to her wishes, more suitable to her disposition, and better adapted for her residence.

The banquet terminated much in the usual manner, the three heroes were conveyed by their servants to their separate bed-chambers, to borrow from sleep the means of cooling the fever of the brain, and repairing the wide devastation of the intellectual powers which Bacchus had made.

It was day-break before Narcissus began to grow sober, and then his dozes were so disturbed by dreams, that he

could not glean from them sufficient refreshment to chase away the last vapours of intoxication. Now did fancy renew the tremendous conflict between the oranges, the olives, and the pines, and the almonds, the filberds, and the melons; now the glasses and decanters were engaged in sanguinary strife, and the wines mingled their variegated streams about the table. Now imagination visited the real field, and sketched the wrecks of man which lay scattered around, an almost undistinguishable mass; now feebly echoed the tremendous roar of the artillery; until the echoes grew too loud for Morpheus to endure, and then the poppy-nurturing god, in terror, stretched his downy wings, and withdrew himself from sight.

Copperisle, on the contrary, having been more on his guard than his guests,

and, consequently, suffered less injury from the Bacchanalian frolic, was stirring with the sun; for, having promised a masquerade for the evening, he was aware that not an instant must be lost in making those arrangements which the shortness of the time would allow. Parties were to be invited from all the adjacent country; dresses were to be provided; apartments fitted up; a sumptuous provision prepared; and every inventive power to be exhausted, to honour his illustrious guest.

About an hour after noon, Mahony announced his master; and, in a few minutes, Narcissus graced the breakfast-table with his presence; but, alas, it was not the gay type of ardour panting after pleasure, rushing smilingly and gracefully into the apartment which pre-

sented itself; but a being, listless and weak, his countenance pale, his cheeks sunken, his knees tottering as if incompetent to bear the weight of their ponderous superstructure; that superstructure itself bent from its original elegance of form; he came not smilingly nor alertly; his gait was slow and indolent; and, instead of a smile, a vacant stare emanated from his eyes; yet, withal, there was a remnant of gracefulness in his movements; so that like a broken diamond, the beauty of the fragments discovered how valuable the gem would have been in its original perfection.

"Well, my boy," said Narcissus, as he seated himself on the sofa, by the side of Copperisle—"How is your pulse this morning? Any fever, eh? By the Lord, we got quite muzzy last night, to

do honour to your house and entertainment. I have been sober lately. When was I muzzy before, Mac ?"

Mahony appeared to tax his memory; and, after a proper pause, replied—"Egad, I believe your highness has not *excessed* for the last six or seven days."

The term was extremely expressive, new, and genteel; and Narcissus rewarded his *vade mecum* with a look of grateful esteem, and then resumed, "Some time since, I could not have existed two days without *excess-ing*, aye, that's the word. But do, pray, my lord, give me a goblet of brandy."

If there be any readers who are so unacquainted with all the forms of polite life, as to start at the idea of brandy being the preface to breakfast, it is right

that they should be instructed. Be it known, therefore, to such, that in the fashionable pharmacopœia, brandy is the great physical regenerator and stimulator of the natural system; that it cures the spleen, and elevates the spirits; that it restores, after dissipation, the frame to its perfect tone; and that it is, in brief, the only true *aqua vitæ* to those who are the victims of illness, indigestion, lassitude, care, intemperance or *ennui*.

Copperisle was sufficiently conversant with the manners and customs of fashionable life, to know full well all the wants of those refined beings who move in this elevated hemisphere. He had accordingly provided decanters filled with various sorts of exhilarating cordials, which stood upon the breakfast-table; and out of these he immediately selected one, from which he pour-

ed out a brimmer, and handed it, with much grace and humility, to Narcissus, who, without hesitation, exclaiming—"May you ne'er want a friend, nor a bottle, my lord," drank off the whole of its contents.

The effect was instantaneous; the great man was no longer listless and indolent; all the energy of the vivifying liquor sparkled in his eyes, and he appeared, with the aid of this powerful auxiliary, that being which he ought to have seemed before he had placed the spirit in requisition to impart to him its false fire. A smile instantly lighted up his countenance, and his voice itself seemed more youthful and more musical, as he ejaculated, holding up the empty goblet—"Now, my lord, I am myself again; as strong and vigorous as any tenant of my manor; and this reno-

vation I attribute to omnipotent brandy. I have a mind to serve it as one of my ancestors did the loin of beef."

This declaration, it is probable, may be too well understood by the reader, to require any particular explication; time and space therefore will be better employed in narrating what followed it, than in expounding that which is quite clear and comprehensible. Copperisle certainly felt some alarm lest Narcissus should carry his purpose into execution, for he was well aware, that if he did so, and the circumstance should, as it undoubtedly would, subsequently be winded about the manor, the Fever-islanders, who were very much addicted to slandering and ridiculing their superiors, would make some tale of it which would perhaps reflect upon himself, as well as upon the good sense of his illustrious

guest. He was, however, at a loss in what way to prevent the occurrence which he deprecated; for he was well aware that any attempt at dissuasion would only strengthen the determination of Narcissus to execute his project, and thus approximate the very issue, which he so much wished to avoid.

A stray buck from Copperisle's flock of deer, at this very moment presented himself upon the lawn, at a moderate distance from the windows of the apartment in which they were sitting. Copperisle immediately seized the opportunity of diverting the attention of Narcissus from his scheme of knighting the brandy. "I'll hold your highness a dozen pounds," said he, pointing to the animal, "that you do not fetch him down."

" A dozen !" cried Narcissus. "I'll bet you a hundred that I do." And up jumped Narcissus, at once forgetting the brandy and his purpose.

" Done, your highness," cried Copperisle: and ringing the bell, ordered a fowling-piece and ammunition to be brought instantly; while the poor animal, unconscious of the black conspiracy which was formed against him, leisurely grazed the verdant pasture, at about one hundred yards from the spot where his enemies were cruelly engaged in planning and endeavouring to circumvent his security.

The fowling-piece was brought, and loaded by Mahony with two balls; the window was opened, and Narcissus, stepping forward to the viranda, exclaimed—" Is the bet that I don't kill

the gentleman, or shall I gain it if I hit him, to the satisfaction of both of you?"

Copperisle was aware that the bet was plainly stated and well understood; but he saw the drift of the question, and was too much of a courtier to say any thing which could displease his guest: he therefore very promptly replied—"Touch the animal, your highness; and the bet is your own."

"Right! right! So I understood it," returned Narcissus, and instantly levelled his piece and fired. The animal instantly sprang into the thicket, while Narcissus, reeling from the recoil of the piece, vociferated—"I have it, my lord; the buck is either dead, or desperately wounded."

Copperisle could scarcely refrain from

laughing heartily at the readiness with which Narcissus claimed the hundred, although it was most palpable, that the beast was as brisk and uninjured after the fire as he had been before it. But he had not an idea that he should save his hundred pounds, when he proposed the bet; he therefore acquiesced, without hesitation, in the opinion of Narcissus, that the buck was slain, and contented himself as he reached his money, with exclaiming—"Egad, your highness took fatal aim, for I never saw a poor devil give such a bound before."

Narcissus, winking at Mahony, as he pocketed the cash, replied—"Ah, my lord, I'm down upon the proper mode. I'll bet you another hundred that out of twenty shots, at any thing you mention, still or moving, I kill nineteen, and fatally wound the twentieth. Won't I, Mac?"

Mahony immediately declared it was a dead certainty; but Copperisle had no wish to give away any more hundreds, he therefore contented himself with declaring his highness to be the very best shot in the manor, and declined any further betting on the strength of a contrary opinion.

The grand exploit of Narcissus occupied the conversation of the whole trio, during the breakfast-time, and the brandy was removed from the table without a single word more being said upon the subject of the distinguished honor intended for it; for Narcissus could not avoid congratulating himself every moment upon the excellence of his eye, and asking Copperisle "if he would not be more cautious in future how he offered to bet against him?" adding—"Nobody, my lord, ever gained any thing by making bets against me, depend upon it."

Nothing would do now for Narcissus, but to go round the park, during the rest of the morning, and to try his skill, in order to convince Copperisle that it was not a chance shot which had gained him the hundred pounds; but that, although for the soul of him he could not get his host to come into any other bet on the subject, nor even Mahony himself, merely to shew his declaration was not mere bravado, he would fire twenty shots at Copperisle's deer, to establish his sporting fame for ever.

CHAP. XVII.

Sporting excursion—An easy transition to the preparations for the masquerade—Curiosity leads Mahony into an intrigue—Its progress and termination—A peep at a masquerade—And some few things consequent upon it, which are by no means unusual nor unnatural—A fair termination of a foul prospect.

Although, during the whole of his morning's excursion, Narcissus had not made above two shots with effect, out of more than thirty, he had, as usual, received credit for almost every fire; and, so open was his highness to flattery, that assertions as remote from the fact, as light is from darkness, passed into his

ears, without the monitor of reason once interfering to detect the glaring imposition. If a deer bounded, it was described as the agony of death ; if it ran nimbly away to some distant covert, it was fatally wounded, and carried its destruction with it ; and once or twice, when Narcissus seemed particularly anxious to collect the game he had killed, Mahony and Copperisle persuaded him to abandon the intention, and to leave the slaughtered victims of his prowess for the servants to convey to the lodge.

What with the recollection of his own skill, and the anticipation of the pleasures of the evening masquerade, Narcissus found ample employment for his fancy during the remainder of the day ; so that when Copperisle was compelled to absent himself for the purpose of superintending the arrangements which

were necessary to give a finish to the festive scene, his absence was scarcely felt by his illustrious guest.

And the preparations were such as to do honor to the taste and promptitude of their originator. The whole spacious suite of apartments on the first story were thrown into one, which was interspersed with countless artificial bowers and grottos, ornamented with richest flowers and fruitage; elegant skreens, tastefully scattered, composed shaded retreats in various parts of the extensive apartment, which was terminated at the remote end by a conservatory, into which were collected all the rarest productions of nature, grouped and laid out with inimitable judgment.

Such was the fairy scene, which presented itself first to Mahony, whom cu-

riosity had led to explore the scene. "Mon Dieu!" said he, as he strutted with no inconsiderable self-satisfaction, up and down amidst the bowers and grots. —"Our host has exerted himself to make us comfortable. What delicious spots are here for sweet dalliance! Oh, had I but my J——n here, now that heaven has kindly freed me from domestic ties, how blest should I be above all men! Or had I any other fair damsel, with whom to sport in this paradise, I don't think I should be particularly choice about the person."

Scarcely had Mahony paused, before Milabel, the favorite maid of Lady Copperisle, who had stepped into the apartment to gratify her eyes with a peep, presented herself to the view of the amorous swain. Milabel was somewhere about three and twenty, possessed of a hand-

some countenance and an attractive figure: there was withal a gaiety about her which gave her an additional fascination at first sight; and as Mahony, although the fashion of the court had fixed fifty as the standard of female beauty, most vulgarly retained the opinions which he had imbibed from nature, and really preferred youth to age, and the gay alabaster brow of twenty, to the wrinkled and withering front of near three-score; it cannot be matter of much astonishment, that at the sight of the fair intruder, just at this critical moment, he felt his blood dance pretty warmly through his veins.

It was the first time Mahony had seen Milabel, and he was not a little puzzled how to address her, for address her he was determined he would. The damsel, however, soon gave him an opportunity;

for suddenly perceiving him, and imagining him to be a person of high rank and consequence, she blushed, dropped a low curtsey, and, in a manner the very opposite of awkward, began to make apologies for disturbing him, and shewed an intention to retire.

Mahony, alarmed lest he should lose the opportunity of paying suit to so prepossessing and inviting a face, stepped hastily towards her, and seizing her unreluctant hand, pressed it rather freely and impetuously to his lips, and replied, "Fair excellence, I would not for worlds allow you to leave the apartment. The charms of this enchanting *chef-d'œuvre* of art would lose their principal attraction, were you to depart. By heavens, you shall not quit this spot, until I have poured out the homage of my heart before you, and imparted to you, if pos-

sible, some share of the ardour I now feel."

Milabel was by no means alarmed nor offended at this rhodomontade; on the contrary, her efforts to disentangle her hand from his eager and repeated caresses were so slight and so evidently insincere, as to encourage rather than repel further advances; and Mahony was too old a scholar in the college of intrigue, to be at a loss how to understand the meaning of her behaviour, or to hesitate in what manner to improve it.

"Dearest angel," cried Mahony, catching her in his arms as he spoke, and passionately kissing her lips—"Who and what are you? for, by heaven, I love you."

"Gracious heaven!" answered Mi-

label, yet without once attempting to free herself—" You will absolutely stifle me. Bless me, how can you think of taking such liberties. I declare my lady will chide me, for you have so discomposed my dress, that I cannot possibly conceal my confusion."

Mahony was at once convinced that he was caressing the lady's maid, and this discovery, instead of damping his ardour, only served to inflame it. He began to embrace her with redoubled fervor ; called her his angel, his delight ; assured her he was a man of consequence, and that he would be true to her for life, if she would consent to impart to him that happiness, which it was in her power to bestow. And, at the same time, he became so uncommonly pressing, that poor Milabel was carried, without scarcely knowing what was passing,

to one of the shady seats in a corner of the room.

"Good gracious, Sir, we shall be interrupted, I am sure we shall," cried Milabel—"for heaven's sake let me go, and I will meet you when you please."

"No, no, my little cherub," cried Mahony—"nothing like present opportunity. Let this little *douceur* silence all scruples, and be to you an earnest of my future constancy and support," and, saying this, Mahony placed a note of much value in the hands of Milabel.

It was always a maxim in the Feverisle, that value should uniformly be given for money, let the purpose to which it was applied be whatever it might. Every thing in the island was

a purchaseable commodity, even those matters and things which, in most other manors, were accustomed to be held sacred. The *onus* of the obligation always rested upon the shoulders of him who received the money, and who was constantly stigmatized with opprobrious epithets, if he refused to return the required recompence. The moment, therefore, that Milabel had cast her eyes over the note which the generosity of Mahony had bestowed upon her, she found every inclination to oppose his wishes insensibly disappear; and murmuring in a half-whisper—" Dear sir, you are so kind, that I cannot be ungrateful," she sank into his arms, and her head fell upon his shoulder.

Mahony was in absolute extacy at the approximation of his happiness, and seizing his charmer round the waist,

began to take those liberties which she shewed no kind of reluctance to yield; when at the moment that a most emphatic "FIE!" had escaped from the lips of Milabel, a loud laugh close at their side, suddenly paralyzed the toying lovers; poor Milabel shrieked and fainted, while Mahony, lifting up his eyes, with uncommon horror and apprehension, beheld Narcissus gazing at him, with a countenance distended with laughter, and holding both his sides, and Copperisle close behind him, leaning against the edge of the screen, in an attitude and with a phiz not a whit more serious.

"Unkennelled, by the lord Harry!" stammered Narcissus, as soon as he had sufficiently recovered the use of his faculties to speak intelligibly.

" And had we been sportively inclined," added Copperisle, " we might have played the part of Vulcan, and bagged them both at once."

Mahony looked down upon the ground, then upon Milabel, who began to open her eyes again, then upon the ground again; took out his handkerchief, hemmed two or three times, changed colour, and attempted to speak, but failed in the effort, until Narcissus re-assured him, by exclaiming—

" Zounds, Mac, don't look sheepish, man. There's nothing to be *glum* about. How many times have I been engaged in such little affairs; and, as for you, my lord, (turning to Copperisle) I'll be bound for it, you have had your share of them. Come, look up, Mac; you

have had a good taste. The girl is handsome enough to make a stoic lick his lips. Egad, had I been in your place, I would not have answered for my own chastity."

Mahony felt himself a little revived by this sort of consolatory language; and, summoning to his aid all the little courage he was able to muster, he at length proceeded in expressing something like a broken apology—" he had somehow—God only knew how—found himself in company with the girl—and felt a strange something—a sort of tickling round about his heart—it was very odd—an unaccountable sensation—he struggled all he could—but the frailty of man was in the way—the devil hurried him on—and he certainly had fallen into the temptation—he hoped God and Nar-

cissus would forgive him—it was certainly a sad thing—but it was nature—and he hoped to be excused—for this was the first time he had ever been guilty of the sin."

He would have gone on perhaps, for half an hour, had not Narcissus here interrupted him, and told him, in a whisper, that, were he disposed to torment him, he could call over the names of several females with whom report had oftentimes associated him in a similai kind of intercourse; an intimation which increased the confusion of Mahony so considerably, that Narcissus and Copperisle, feeling some pity for his situation, turned off to view the arrangements in the other part of the extensive apartment, leaving the poor distressed couple to recover as well as they could from their alarm.

It was an unfortunate moment for Mahony and Milabel, when Copperisle suggested to his illustrious guest to take him through the opened suite of chambers, and to display for his approbation, the extensive preparations which had been making to do him honour, and to render the masquerade perfect. The proposition was made soon after the dinner-cloth was removed, and was carried into effect at the critical moment when Mahony was on the verge of happiness.

There was a side door close to the spot where Mahony and Milabel had seated themselves, and, taking advantage of the temporary absence of the intruders, the perplexed pair silently conveyed themselves away from the obnoxious scene of their disgrace.

Much as Narcissus was disposed to quiz Mahony for his incontinency, he had no opportunity during this evening, for, scarcely had he returned to the banqueting room, before the company began to pour in from the surrounding country to partake in the gay scene of mimicry and fun, which had been projected for the entertainment of the evening. The families invited, were very few of them of the class honoured by the style and title of *noble:* the latter description of tenants was but thinly scattered through this district, seeing that there was but little attraction in the smell and hue which evaporated from the innumerable furnaces which vomited on every hand incessant volumes of vapour, sufficiently dark and powerful to eclipse even the day itself.

The greater part of the company was

to consist of country squires and their ladies, and their sons and their daughters, the proprietors of these furnaces, who, by the way, were men of reputed worth and wealth ; and some few others, who lived without any kind of visible employment or mode of procuring a livelihood, and, therefore, were entitled, gentlemen ; and were allowed the inestimable privilege of walking on the same floor, and sitting at the same table with the nobles.

In a short time, Narcissus had selected for himself the appropriate dress of an eastern sovereign, Copperisle was a Hottentot warrior, and Mahony a Bacchanalian ; and, in these habits, they entered into the grand scene of gaiety. Here the vision of the voluptuous orientalist was fully realized ; here pleasure extended her sceptre, and reflection and

care were banished and proscribed; the moral of the scene was immorality; all the turbulent passions of the breast were loosened and given full scope for the most unrestrained exercise: the blush of the female countenance, the workings of guilt and shame upon the features, were concealed beneath the mask which hid the visage itself; and modesty, having received no invitation to the masquerade, but being aware that she should be considered an unwelcome visitor, merely accompanied some few of the guests to the door of Copperisle's mansion, and then dropping a farewel curtesy, went to make a call at a humbler mansion.

Here were groupes of Turks and Tartars, Orientals and Laplanders, princesses and beggars, harlequins and orators, bacchanals and cynics, the

graces, the gods, and a very inefficient imitation of the virtues; ladies of fashion and milkmaids; and one or two fair venders of fish and fruits; in brief, there was an assembly of all the countless diversities of the human character, an epitome of all nations individually disposed to promote one general enjoyment.

Mahony was the first who reeled into the apartment, and it was a very short time before he had prevailed upon a fishwoman to become his *protegee.* Narcissus strutted about with a tinsel sceptre, and assumed a majesty which did not belong to him, and which tended more effectually to his concealment than the mask which he wore. He had not long wandered round the apartment, before a Zobeide stepped up to him, and taking him by the arm, accosted

him as her liege lord, and insisted upon her right of accompanying him in his peregrinations, in order to prevent him from seeking illicit amnsement.

Narcissus examined his partner as narrowly as he could through her disguise. She appeared to be rather under the middle age, and well formed, somewhat inclining to the *embonpoint*, which rendered her attractive in the estimation of Narcissus. His highness, who was never disinclined to an intrigue, instantly determined to humour this conceit of his fair *inamorata;* he therefore replied to her in a corresponding tone of tenderness — " Fairest rose of the east! Mirror of perfection! Pink of earthly happiness! I am solely at thy disposal. Lead me whither thou wilt. Beneath thy lovely footstep the flowers will spring from the womb of earth, and thy smile

will create a paradise as far as it extends. Come, otto of heaven, and let us seek some bower of bliss to revel in."

This wonderful effort of amorous eloquence produced a corresponding effect upon the fair unknown, who putting her arm gaily within that of Narcissus, with the other hand patted his cheek, and permitted him to lead her out of the great room into a private apartment adjoining, where, on unveiling her features, what was the astonishment and momentary consternation of Narcissus, to behold in his new friend, the wife of his host!

The confusion, however, was but momentary. Before he discovered himself he had obtained proofs that he had not mistaken her intention; and then ex-

hibiting his own countenance, he completed the conquest he had made, by the real display of his rank and character. At this critical juncture, a noise was heard at the door at which they had entered, as of some one approaching; there were no accessible means of escape; the other entrance was fastened up with a design to prevent any improper egress thereat; and nothing remained but for the alarmed lovers to put the best face they could upon the business, and to endeavour by the assumption of an appearance, at least, of conscious innocence, to defeat any suspicion of guilt.

Before they had time, however, to accomplish the design of composing themselves, the Bacchanalian, Mahony, and his vulgar partner made their entrance into the room. The partner of Narcissus had resumed her mask, but his

highness, in his haste, had unfortunately mislaid his visor, and was therefore open to detection. In the heat of the moment, he darted forward and seizing Mahony by the collar, demanded of him to shew himself instantly, if he would escape annihilation; a threat which produced a powerful effect on the unconscious culprit, who instantly fell on his knees, and throwing off his mask, while his fair one stood trembling by his side, exclaimed in a stammering voice—"Your highness! Behold your faithful Mahony."

Narcissus was now, in his turn, as much astonished as Mahony had been at the first sight of his master in the delicate situation in which he had found him; but he soon recovered himself, and, whispering to his frail partner to banish her fears, since he would now

effectually prevent any exposure of her, even if Mahony had been so prying as to discover whom she was, he gave her a tender squeeze, and turned round to leave the room.

At this moment, the partner of Mahony was making an attempt to escape, when by some accident, her mask being loosened, slipped from her countenance, and Narcissus immediately caught a full view of the lady, and recognized *Charlotte*, the sister of his own *inamorata*.

For a moment a mutual titter ensued between Narcissus and Lady Cooperisle; while poor Charlotte, a lovely young female of about three and twenty, stood trembling and blushing with apprehensions of the probable consequence of this mortifying *eclaircissement*. Narcissus, however, soon reassured her,

attributed her introduction into the private apartment as merely the effect of the common gaiety of the evening; and then, taking Mahony by the arm, he cast a look of tenderness at the kind dame, who had so materially exerted herself to increase to him the pleasure of the evening, which was accompanied by a similar glance from Mahony to the palpitating Charlotte, and the two guests withdrew from the scene to their own apartment, leaving the ladies to console each other on the harmless issue of an adventure which menaced, in one stage, much more unpleasant results.

CHAP. XVIII.

Some more of the consequences of the recent discoveries — Narcissus betrays an inclination for a slice of an intrigue—Mahony's subservience—Copperisle's curiosity, and the bad effects of it —A compromise—The departure of Narcissus —Terrors by night — Germs of conspiracy — Climax of horrors—The denouement.

The double discovery which had just taken place, effectually prevented any recrimination on either side; Narcissus, much as he had previously felt disposed to play off a little ludicrous satire upon his *fac-totum*, since he had

himself been detected in something of a very similar nature, could not now advert to the subject, with any kind of decorous pretext whatsoever. For some moments, they both remained perfectly silent, not looking at each other, for, although a circumstance of very rare occurrence, they really felt an awkward reluctance to meet a reciprocal glance, but their eyes most stedfastly fixed upon the ground, until at length, Mahony ventured modestly to lift his head a little and to exclaim—" Will your highness return to the masquerade ?"

This simple interrogatory gave instant motion to the tongue of Narcissus, and stimulated it to its accustomed velocity—" Masquerade, Mac," said he—" Aye, aye, let us go and have a little more enjoyment—yet, no, on second thoughts, I think I won't—Ah, Mac,

you are a lucky dog. 'Two heats in one evening—fine sport, fine sport—Well, well, Mac, all fair, all fair—d——d unlucky though, that Copperisle and I—you understand, Mac?"

The meaning was sufficiently intelligible to Mahony, who perfectly agreed that the intrusion was unlucky enough, but, assuming an air of diffidence, he replied—"A mere matter of the moment, your highness; and, perhaps it was fortunate, your highness, that Copperisle did enter at the moment, as it may have prevented consequences which might have been expensive and troublesome. Then your highness will not return to the masquerade?"

"Not return to the masquerade! Yes,—I think I will, Mac," returned Narcissus; and after a moment's pause,

resumed — "But, Mac, who was the pretty girl you had got so snugly behind the screen? She was a charming morsel, and I should like to be a little better acquainted with her."

"Your highness may command your true Mahony in all things," answered the courtier, bowing to the ground— "The girl to whom you allude, is no other than Milabel, the favourite maid of our hostess, and I have no doubt, much at the service of your highness. Shall I precede you to the masquerade room."

"No, I think I shan't go, Mac," responded Narcissus; "I think I shall endeavour to whisper a word or two to this pretty Milabel. Can you manage to find her out, and to bring her hither, while Copperisle and his friends are

amusing themselves with their mimicry and false characters?"

Mahony simply replied—"Your highness shall be gratified to the full extent of your wishes;" and, saying this, immediately disappeared, leaving Narcissus to reflect upon the happiness which he anticipated from the approaching interview with Milabel. Narcissus, it is true, had been much slandered and defamed by the Fever-islanders, some of whom had gone such great lengths of scandal, as to assert that he had so freely indulged in all the vices of voluptuousness during his early life, that he was actually and literally incapacitated from pursuing his disposition for pleasure, with any effect, in this more advanced period of his manhood. He had been lampooned by the grave, and ridiculed by the gay for his intemperate zeal in the

chace of sensual enjoyment; but whether or not he was the just object of these repeated and severe attacks, the author of these pages presumeth not to say.

While his highness was thus pleasantly engaged with his own thoughts, Mahony was by no means indolent in quest of the fair Milabel, whom, after a brief search, he met crossing one of the galleries of the mansion; and, accosting her with a familiar salute, Mahony began his errand with a tissue of fine speeches on his own account, which had the speedy effect of softening down the damsel to such a degree as to render her disposed to accede to almost any wishes he might have the warmth to indulge and the hardihood to express. He carefully kept out of sight the real aim of his tenderness, but having won

her over so far as to gain her consent to accompany him, he insensibly led her to the door of the apartment in which he had left the anxious Narcissus, and, suddenly throwing open the door, with an ejaculation of---"There, your highness!" pushed her into his master's presence, and without daring to raise his eyes to meet the petrifying glance of indignation and surprize which darted from Milabel's eyes, disappeared.

Narcissus had been too much used to this kind of scene to be at a loss how to act. He immediately made his advances with an ardour which was pretty sure to command success, backed as it was by his powerful rank. Milabel, quickly recovering from her first gust of anger and consternation, began rapidly to draw comparisons in her own mind, between her late lover and her present;

and as her judgment in this instance made use of the scales of self-interest, Mahony was speedily kicked up in the air, while Narcissus preponderated, and Milabel fell into the golden snare.

The absence of Narcissus from the masquerade had only been noticed by Copperisle, and in his breast the circumstance excited no small uneasiness. For a moment he fancied that some sudden indisposition (for Narcissus was subject to temporary attacks) had rendered it necessary for his illustrious guest to retire from the noisy and brilliant scene; but when an hour had nearly passed away, and there was no appearance of his return, the loyal duty of the host impelled him to quit the apartment, and to go instantly in search of Narcissus.

He had accordingly wandered from room to room to no purpose, and was making his way to the apartment of his visitor, when, at a little distance before him, he perceived Mahony guiding the credulous Milabel towards the same spot. Copperisle was too much attached to his master, and was too well versed in the school of subordination, to attempt to prevent the scheme which he saw in agitation; but, following softly, he came up with the couple at the moment when they had reached the door of the room, and secreting himself in a small adjoining room, where he could, unobserved, command a distinct view of every thing which passed, he witnessed the entrapping of Milabel.

As soon as Mahony had taken his departure, Copperisle came forth from his hiding-place, for he had as much curi-

osity in his composition as most men, and approaching the door cautiously, placed his ear to the key-hole, to catch any whispers which might convey to him the purport of what was passing within the apartment. He had occupied this station for some minutes, without obtaining the slightest clue to that which he sought, when, straining himself still closer to the door, he unfortunately made a slip, and, the latch giving way, was precipitated with no inconsiderable violence, into the room.

Words would but very insufficiently paint the passions which struggled in the countenances of Narcissus and Milabel, at this intrusion; nor were those which agitated the visage of Copperisle less prominent. He was prostrate on the floor of the room, and did not dare to raise his eyes to look at the

scene, into which, half involuntarily, he had been precipitated; but inwardly he most devoutly cursed his own prying disposition which had hurried him into a situation of such peril and inconvenience, and from which, he was aware, it would require all his presence of mind to extricate himself.

The noise of the fall of Copperisle had also alarmed Mahony, who was at no great distance from the apartment at the moment, and the shriek of Milabel breaking on his ear, at the same time, he imagined some dreadful accident had taken place, and with a vociferous roar, which acted both as an alarm and a guide to half a dozen valets and chambermaids, who were strolling about pretty near, he darted forward towards the scene of the uproar, and, in a few seconds, with a whole retinue of menials, to the in-

creased dismay of the whole company, entered the chamber.

Whether this motley group of ready auxiliaries saw any thing to compensate for the trouble they had taken, after they became witnesses to the chamber scene, the author saith not. It would look very like slanderous for him to assert that there was aught of indelicacy in the posture or appearance of either Narcissus or Milabel, unless he had some substantial grounds on which to make the declaration; and even in that case, there might be some danger in being too specific in the details of circumstances which are not the most fit to come before the reader's eye—No; let those who seek for food to satisfy further their appetites after wickedness of this description, enquire of some of the party who were present on the occasion; and seeing that

oral tales, unlike scriptural, are not likely to lead to perilous results, it is ten to one in favour of their success.

The motley assemblage stood gazing at each other for a little time, but it was only so long as to give Copperisle leisure to recover himself sufficiently to discover that the more public the affair became, the more difficulty should he find in ultimately appeasing the anger of his guest. He therefore waved his hand, as soon as he was capable of understanding what he himself meant to intimate, and the groupe departed with the utmost possible rapidity; leaving only Copperisle and Mahony, with the agitated Narcissus and his disconcerted partner in distress.

"Your highness," stammered Copperisle, "with all the courtier-like suavity

which he could summon to his aid—
"had I been [illegible] of your employment, my loyalty and love of pleasure are so established, that I should have been the last person in the universe to interrupt you."

Narcissus paused a short time, to permit the heat of his feelings to evaporate; and, having arranged in his own mind, how to conduct himself, he assumed a smiling countenance, and, stretching out his hand to Copperisle, replied—"Don't speak of it, my good lord! A mere *bagatelle!* D— —d unlucky, to be sure, to expose oneself to such a set of ragged rascals, but it is over now; you must give me Milabel for my companion."

Copperisle was in extacy at the apparent good humour of Narcissus, and most readily assented to the request his high-

ness had made; a request too, which seemed to be in no way displeasing to Milabel; and matters being thus amicably arranged, Copperisle and Mahony retired, after the latter had assisted in the capacity of valet, to undress his illustrious master, and to assist him into his bed.

On the following morning—for we pass over the events of the residue of the night, as not being strictly within our province to narrate—On the following morning, after an early breakfast, Narcissus, having pretty well sated himself with the pleasures of this part of the country, set forward on his journey, himself and Mahony in one carriage, and his principal valet and Milabel in a second which followed closely.

It was the object of the splendid tra-

veller, this terrestrial comet, whose transit fired the scenes through which he made his way, to reach a distant spot, yclep'd Ashley de la Pouch, before he would allow it to be said that he had terminated the day's journey. Now as this said place lay at a very considerable distance, it required more than usual celerity in the drivers to render the performance of the journey practicable within the stipulated time. It was, however, the will of the high and mighty Narcissus, and what individual would presume to offer it opposition?

There was no early moon, and towards eight o'clock, darkness began to close in about the horizon; the distant landscape gradually receded from the view of the travellers; and, soon afterwards, the nearer objects began to wear their misty night gowns. Bye and bye, the

road itself became less perceptible, until, at length, not a vestige of light cheered their progress, save that which issued from the insignificant lamps of the carriage.

"This is not a turbulent country, I hope, Mac!" exclaimed Narcissus, who certainly betrayed some very powerful aguish symptoms as he spoke.

"God forbid, your highness!" responded Mahony; and here there was a cessation of the colloquy, which endured, at least, for half an hour.

The clock of a village through which they passed, struck eleven. A number of people were still standing at their doors, carousing, and giving loose to a noisy but harmless mirth; yet, harmless though it was, it was offensive to the

ears of Narcissus; whose fears immediately suggested to him the possibility that the boors were assembled together for some unlawful purposes, and might, perchance, take it into their traitorous heads to intercept his journey, and offer violence to his person. As this idea flashed across his mind, he uttered an audible groan, and, in a voice equally audible, exclaimed—"Good God, what an infamous police! These wretches ought to be all imprisoned!"

"Every man of them, your highness," cried Mahony, who was never less disposed to argue any subject with his master, than when he saw him in a temper like that in which he now was—"Every individual of them, your highness!" repeated Mahony, with an increased emphasis.

Narcissus shrugged his shoulders, and desired Mahony to remind him, in his return home, that he gave orders that some new prisons, and some severer justices should be established in this district,—which displayed such very alarming symptoms of insubordination and conspiracy.

They had passed the obnoxious village about half an hour, and the postilions had reported that the lapse of another half-hour would bring them to the close of their journey; and the consequence of this intimation was a proportionate elevation of the spirits, both of Narcissus and his trembling companion.

Narcissus had even so far recovered his spirits and gaiety, that he began gradually to crack jokes upon Mahony,

with regard to his intriguing disposition, a subject in which, certainly, his highness was but little qualified to pass censure, unless he had himself been more pure.

Mahony was just on the point of a repartee, when a loud cry from the foremost postilion most gloomily interrupted the levity of the travellers; Mahony instantly exclaimed—" The horses are killed—a dozen blunderbusses at least—Lord have mercy on me, for I am a dead man!"

" And so am I!" returned Narcissus, repeating the prayer, and tumbling from his seat upon the rug at the bottom of the carriage, which he had thought enough to pull up, and throw over himself—" I said we should be murdered! Oh police, and magistrates, may you

be —— No, no, if I am to die, let me say nothing malignant. I forgive every body their trespasses; may heaven forgive me!"

Mahony, who was stretched at his length on the seat, now commenced—"I am very sure I am not fit to die! Oh, merciful banditti, pray don't think of levelling fire-arms at me. I am but a poor servant, God help me, and have not the means to buy my safety."

Then did Mahony put his head down upon the rug, declaring, that a shot in the body or the limbs might leave a chance, but if the head was made a thoroughfare for a leaden Mercury, it was impossible for him to survive it.—"Didn't your highness hear the report of the blunderbusses?"

"Can't positively say I did," stammered Narcissus; then shaking off the head of Mahony from the rug—"Zounds!" added he—"you need not fear lead, for your pericranium is made of a heavier, and, I dare say, a harder material. Look out, and see what they are, for they don't seem to disturb us."

A command more terrible could not have reached the ears of Mahony, who was so ardently and sincerely attached to himself, that he could not endure the remotest possibility of danger. Obey, however, he must; there was no alternative; he, therefore, wiped his eyes, and feebly stuttered forth—"Since it is the plea—plea—sure of—of—my il-lus—lus—lustri—ous ma—ma—master that I should die--die—die—pray, your high—highness—to—to—give my—wa—wa—watch and mo—mo—money and

jew—jewels and ca—ca—ca—cash to my—oh, Lord! I am very fa—fa—faint—your highness—to my de—de—dear——"

At this moment, the carriage door opened, and a loud cry of despair broke from both Narcissus and Mahony, who apprehended nothing short of immediate death; when the anguish of the travellers quickly gave way to joy, on their hearing the voice of the valet, who, although he could scarcely keep a feature of his countenance in its place, as he surveyed the grotesque scene before him, and assisted the chief actors to resume their seats, with tolerable solemnity of tone, informed his master, that some wicked varlets had laid huge trees across the road, no doubt, for the most diabolical purposes, and that the horses had stumbled over them, and thrown

the first driver into the road, whose cry it was which had alarmed his highness and Mahony; but that by the skilfulness of the other postilion, any further consequences had been happily prevented, and the horses, without having sustained any serious injury, were again put in proper trim for the immediate continuance of the journey.

Narcissus and Mahony stared at each other with silent shame blended with astonishment, as soon as the valet had re-closed the door, and the carriage was again in motion. At length, after a long pause, Narcissus broke out into a most immoderate fit of laughter, and began to rally Mahony most unmercifully upon his verbal will, his "wa—wa—watch, and jew—jewels, and ca—ca—ca—cash," &c. while the latter, who dared not make any retort which might

offend his satirical master, for some time endeavoured to parry off the ridicule by repeated laughter; and, ultimately, finding this mode altogether ineffectual, he leaned his head back in the carriage, and pretended to sleep most soundly, until they had arrived at Ashley-de-la Pouch.

END OF VOLUME II.

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